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THE KEYS OF JUDE

Greetings in the name of the Precious Lamb of God- our Lord Jesus Christ!

First of all, I wanted to thank all of you who have been supportive of the book project that we announced just a few weeks ago! Your generosity is so appreciated and we are praying for a harvest to abound to your account for your financial support. Together we are going to bring the message of "eternal life" to a land that needs to hear the good news that Christianity is not another religion, but a relationship! Thanks again for your partnership in this project!

For those of you who are unaware of these books I am referring to, our ministry has just released a new 3 book series concerning the subject of our personal relationship with God. The Lord instructed me to write these while I was in India two years ago and their purpose is to be discipleship tools not only here in the United States but also in India.

So our plan is simple... It is to raise money through offering these books here in the U.S. for a gift of any amount. With the monies we raise, we will print the same books in India (in much greater quantity than we can here in the States, I might add) and distribute them through a contact I have there in order to help our fellow-Christians grow in their faith and in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It is a worthy project and one that we ask you to prayerfully consider supporting because, number one, you will be receiving what we consider to be life-giving teachings yourself and, number two, you will be helping us to give our brothers and sisters in India those same life-giving teachings as well.

One thing I failed to mention in our letter last month was that, for your convenience, we do have the means for you to give by debit or credit card if you so desire... Just go to our (recently renovated) website @ www.treydickerson.com and you will see the link to this book series on the bottom of the page. This link will lead you to imputing your credit card information on a safe and secure site called PayPal. It is fast and easy! We thank you in advance for your support and hope that these books bring life and light to your walk with God.

As for this month's teaching, I wanted to share with you one of the first truths that God ever revealed to me after I became a born-again Christian. So let's go over to the Book of Jude and take a look at a powerful truth that is contained in this relatively short book of the Bible...

THE KEYS OF JUDE

The Epistle of Jude is an interesting book. For one, it is one of the shortest books of the Bible. There are no chapters necessary, only verses. But one thing that interests me the most about this epistle is how Jude begins it...

Jude explains that as he began to write his epistle, he originally intended to write a doctrinal letter concerning the common salvation that he shared with these fellow believers. In other words, he intended on preaching on what all preachers prefer to talk about- that is, what God has done for us, who we are in Him, among other things that pertain to our common salvation. But it was as if Jude was arrested by the Holy Spirit who instead inspired him to exhort this body of believers to fight for the faith that was originally passed on to them (vs.3). And that was evidently God's plan and purpose for this letter- to heighten our awareness of those who have departed from the faith and also to exhort us in how we can keep ourselves from falling away as they did.

II

Throughout the body of this short letter, Jude describes these apostates and tells us of their future damnation (Jude 4-16). Then, beginning in verse 17, he turns his attention to the recipients of his letter and begins to exhort us in *how* we can contend earnestly to keep ourselves from falling into the same deception as these apostates did.

In verses 17-18 Jude begins to address the church by saying, *“But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time...”* Jude exhorts this particular group of believers to remember how the apostles who started them in the faith told them that this was going to happen. They already warned them that these apostates would come. So since this was prophesied in advance, they should be prepared and not deceived when they did come.

Then Jude begins to further identify these reprobates by describing their behavior... He says at the end of verse 18 and into verse 19... *“who walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.”*

Notice how he, first of all, describes them as “walking according to their own ungodly lusts.” This means that their conduct consisted of indulging themselves with the evil desires that they had. In other words, there was no resistance and no restraints when it came to the lusts of their flesh. If they felt like doing something, they would do it. It did not matter whether it was in agreement with God’s standards or not.

Jude also went on to describe them as “sensual.” This word can be simply defined as “sense-ruled.” This means that they were totally dominated by their physical senses. Therefore, they were led by their emotions and feelings. If they were having a down day, they would cater to those emotions. If they felt like doing something, they let those feelings dictate their attitude and behavior. Simply put, they were dominated by what they saw, heard, and felt. This is what it means to be “sensual”; it is what we more commonly refer to as being “carnal.”

Jude goes on to say that these carnal people “cause divisions.” I can absolutely guarantee you that someone who lives to gratify their own lusts and is dominated by their feelings will be prone to be divisive. The reason is because in Proverbs 13:10 we are told *“only by pride comes contention.”* You see, a self-centered person will always cause division because operating in peace and unity with the body of Christ is the fruit of a humble person, not a self-centered person. Our flesh always seeks its own. So when anything arises that does not cater to our flesh, we will gravitate towards strife and discord.

And, last but not least, Jude said that these sensual, contentious people did not have the Spirit. Why could Jude make such an assumption? It is because they apparently were not exhibiting the fruit of a Spirit-filled life! The mere fact that they were walking after their own evil desires, were dominated and ruled by their senses, and were contentious was evidence enough of an absence of the Spirit of God in their life. As Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruit.”

But this is what I want you to understand... These sensual, divisive, and non-Spirit-filled people started off in the church! These were not unbelievers who came in from the outside attempting to destroy God’s church. These were people who started off as a part of a fellowship and then erred from the path of life. Now the reason I believe it is so important to understand this is because we would be foolish to think that we could not be similarly deceived or that we could not at least exhibit some of their same characteristics. As a matter of fact, I would say that the majority of people in the body of Christ are either walking according to their own ungodly lusts, ruled by their senses, sowing discord, or are not full of the Spirit of God. There is no denying that. Again, just look at the fruit!

III

You see, one very common misconception in many Christians is the belief that they are not capable of falling away from the faith. What I mean is that many born-again, Spirit-filled believers do not truly believe that they could ever get to the place where they would deny the Lord. But don't you know that Peter believed that also? One day, he told Jesus that he would follow Him even to the point of death, and then the next day, he denies Him three times. No, it is arrogance and foolish pride to think that we could not slip back into our former way of living and away from the faith. Now, of course, this does not mean that we have to! If we make wise decisions and continue seeking the Lord, we can stay on track and full of the Holy Spirit now until the end of our race. But we must also understand that the devil is a sly little cuss. He is constantly trying to tempt us to make poor decisions that will ultimately lead us away from the faith that we have embraced. And he does this ever so subtly. It is a slow, methodical process that he uses to eventually cause our hearts to be hardened towards the things of God altogether.

But now Jude gives us the good news and it is for this reason why I love the Book of Jude so. Jude then goes on to give us the keys to making sure this never happens to us. So let's take a look at Jude 20 and see what these keys of Jude are...

In verse 20, he says, "*But you...*" Basically, what Jude was saying was- "On the other hand, unlike those who live how they want to, have become ruled by their senses, are contentious, and are not led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, you have been given the keys to not falling into this same condition..." In other words, in verse 20, Jude begins to give us the keys that will prevent us from walking according to our own lusts, from becoming sense-dominated, from being entrapped in strife, and from not experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in our life.

So let's spend the rest of this month's teaching by looking at Jude's first statement and begin to see how we can continue strong in contending for the faith.

GROUNDED IN NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE

First of all, Jude said, "*But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith...*"

The first key that Jude gives us to not experiencing the same fruit as these apostates but living a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. Let's take an in-depth look at what he meant by this statement...

First of all, the words "building up" come from the Greek word "epoikodomeo." This word comes from three different Greek words which when you define each word and put them together the literal translation is "a roof upon a house." Therefore, this Greek word describes the "building up" of a house which obviously denotes beginning with the foundation and finishing the building process by placing a roof on the house.

So what is the foundation that you are to build your "house" (i.e. your life) upon? Jude says it is "your most holy faith." Now it is important to understand that your "most holy faith" is not a reference to your own personal faith. It is a reference to what Jude referred to earlier in this letter as "*the faith* which was once for all delivered to the saints" (vs.3). Therefore, your most holy faith is a reference to the faith of the New Covenant which was delivered to us through the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ (see vs. 17). This is obviously the reason Jude attached the words "most holy" to the word "faith."

So what Jude is exhorting us to do is to begin to build our lives upon the foundation of New Testament doctrine and New Covenant principles. In other words, we are to let the teachings of the New Testament become the basis for everything we say and do.

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This is exactly what the Lord immediately established me in when I first got saved... He taught me that His Word- particularly the truths of the New Testament- was to be the foundation I built my life on. He showed me at the beginning of my walk that if it is written, then it is the truth- even above what looked true in the natural. It does not matter what we feel like, what we have experienced, etc. If it is in the Book, then it is the truth! No questions asked!

You see, it is vitally important that we are not moved by how we feel; we are only to be moved by what we believe! Therefore, if anything we feel, see, hear, or even think conflicts with what is written in the Holy Scriptures, then we are not to walk according to these things. This is the foundation of Christianity and a principle that we would do good to establish in our lives. But oh how so many Christians do not embrace this... Because of the carnality that is prevalent in so many believers, they base their beliefs on everything from personal experiences to their emotions. This will keep one from experiencing everything that God has for them. No, we have to believe God's Word whether our circumstances substantiate what is written or whether what we experience does not line up with the truth. In many cases, we have to believe before we see it. This is why we are told that we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). **And we cannot walk by faith until we first begin to stand on *the* faith- that is, become established in the truth that God is true and everyone and everything else that might contradict is a liar (see Romans 3:4)!**

Any why is it so important that we let God's Word have this place of esteem in our hearts? It is because if we do not have this foundation to stand on then the devil will undoubtedly get us to put our faith in something other than the truth. For instance, there are many groups out there who do not value the Word of God but only seek after the more spectacular things such as the various gifts of the Spirit. And while I certainly believe that we need to value and esteem the Holy Spirit and His workings, I also believe that we do not need to disesteem God's Word in the process. And one of the main reasons for this is because Satan can certainly manifest himself through supernatural and spectacular means as well, and if we are not grounded in God's Word, then we can be led astray by what the Bible calls "lying signs and wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9).

We always must be leery of basing our lives on anything that appeals to our flesh and spectacular manifestations do indeed appeal to our flesh because they are fun and exciting to experience. God's Word might not always appeal to our flesh. In fact, sometimes it can be challenging to our feelings and emotions because it oftentimes offers correction and reproof. But the Word of God is called a more sure Word of prophecy (2 Peter 1:19)- meaning that it is something God gave us to build our lives on that we can be sure of. It is a solid foundation that we must lay and then as we receive prophecies, words of wisdom, and words of knowledge, we can judge them by what is written and know what is of God and what is not because the Spirit and the Word always, unequivocally agree! Amen!

Therefore, the Word of God is the Rock that God gave all of us to build our lives on- not anything else! But someone might say, "Wait a minute Trey! I thought Jesus is the Rock!" You are correct, but Jesus is the Word too (see John 1:1)! Therefore, it would be a true statement to say that Jesus and the Word of God are both the Rock that we are to build our lives upon since they are one, right? This is why the Scriptures use the phrase "the faith of Jesus." It is because the faith of Jesus is our most holy faith! It is a believing in and building our lives upon the truths that were once for all delivered to all the saints that Jesus is who He said He is and He is the resurrected Christ! Hallelujah to the Lamb! Therefore, just as with Jesus, the Word of God is the only sure and steadfast thing that we can build our lives upon and never fall because it endures forever and its truths never fail!

BUILDING OUR HOUSE ON THE ROCK

In Luke 6:47-49 we have a parable that perfectly illustrates this truth... Jesus started off His illustration of the importance of building our lives on His Word by saying, "*Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:*"

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Notice, first of all, the wording Jesus used at the beginning of His parable... He said, "Whoever comes to Me..." So this obviously describes someone who is considered a Christian because Jesus is referencing those who have come to Him. And then the next description is that this follower of Christ "hears His sayings." So this believer not only came to the knowledge of Him, but they came to learn of Him and be a hearer of the Word of God.

But the third and final characteristic Jesus gives is what most people miss in this parable... Jesus says, "and (he or she) does them (i.e. His sayings)." In other words, not only have these people come to Him (i.e. became Christians), not only have they been hearers of His Word (i.e. likely listening to and studying His Word), but these believers practiced what they heard! And that is the point Jesus was making through this parable- that we must be doers of the Word that we have heard! If you skip down to verse 49 and look at the other believer that Jesus described you can verify this... He said, "*But he who heard and did nothing is like...*" This second type of Christian also came to Jesus and heard His Word, but the difference was that he did nothing with what he heard. In other words, this believer's one major flaw was that they were not doers of the Word that they heard! They followed Jesus, they listened to His teachings, but they never practiced what they heard.

Now let's back up to verses 47&48 and look at the illustration that Jesus gave us of this Christian who was a doer of the Word... Jesus said that "*he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.*" So Jesus described this wise Christian as one who "dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock" as opposed to the unwise Christian who just built his house on the surface of the ground. So by saying that he or she dug deep and laid their foundation on a rock shows that this believer was willing to work harder than the other believer because, although they both built a house, this one was willing to spend some extra time "digging deep" until he found the solid foundation on which he could build his life upon.

You see, some believers put forth more of an effort to "dig deep" into God's Word and discover the truths therein than others do. The difference lies in the condition of our hearts. Some value God's Word more than others and, therefore, are more willing to invest the time and energy to dig out the treasures of truth contained within the Holy Scriptures. And the result is that when we dig deep into the mine of God's Word, we will invariably discover those priceless jewels and make them our own! For those who seek, will find! And, as a general rule, those that have the heart to seek after the riches of God's Word will also have the heart attitude to apply those truths to their everyday lives! For example, when it comes to sales, when do you know that someone truly believes in the product that they are selling? It is when they personally use their own product, right? Likewise, the actions of a Christian oftentimes reflect what they believe in their heart. If we truly value God's Word and believe it is the truth, we will seek to apply those principles into our own life. There is no other way around it! **True faith + a healthy heart = corresponding actions!** And this is when we are laying our foundation on the rock- when we make the effort to discover the truth and then begin to base all of our beliefs and actions on the truth!

You see, as Jesus taught in this parable, if we do not dig deep in the Word of God and then become doers of that Word, then our lives will be subject to the winds and waves of this life. But Jude is specifically referring to the New Testament teachings that came through the apostles as being what we build our lives upon. Why is digging deep into the New Testament so important? It is because the false teachers that he was warning us about do not usually come with some outlandish error. They will usually use the Scripture itself to teach some partial truth that is laced with poisonous error. Peter specifically said that there were those who had already begun taking the teachings of the apostle Paul and twisting them (see 2 Peter 3:16). So we can see from this example that erroneous doctrine certainly can come from how people handle New Testament doctrine, but what I have seen as being the most common error is how people take the precepts of the Old Testament and use its truths to bring people under its bondage. They do this by approaching the principles of

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the Old Testament without coming from the basis of understanding the New Testament. When one does this, it leads God's people into bondage because living under the law is a ministry of condemnation. But please do not misunderstand me...I am not saying that we should not take heed to the Old Testament Scriptures. What I am saying is that it is best to first be firmly grounded in the truths of the New Covenant so that we properly relate to God under our covenant. Then, as we begin to read and study the Old Testament, we will view it as we should- through the lenses of our new and better covenant!

LEST WE DRIFT AWAY

My friends, God has given us His Holy Word in order to reveal to us His will for our lives! By His grace, He has given us this road map to direct us into His general will for all of us. Therefore, do not neglect it! As the author of Hebrews said, "Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away." Let me ask two questions regarding this Scripture: To whom was he writing to? It was to a group of Hebrew converts who were being severely tempted to let go of their profession of faith. This sounds like the same audience that Jude was addressing, doesn't it? And why did he say this? It is because if one fails to give great attention to the word of truth, then there is a slow, methodical digression away from the truth that occurs in their life. In fact, this is the word picture he is giving us by saying "lest we drift away." Have you ever noticed that when you are at the beach that if you do not make an effort in the water to stay in the area that you began in that you will gradually move away from that spot by the current? So the writer of Hebrews encourages us to give attention to God's Word so that we do not let the current of carnality and that tide of error pull us back out to sea. And we must be anchored in God's Word in order to keep this from happening!

There is no escaping it: God's Word plays an integral role in our spiritual growth and preparedness. Sure, the Holy Spirit plays an equally vital role but one cannot be replaced by the other. They work together, perfectly complimenting each other to bring to pass one common purpose- to build a house on a rock that can never be shaken! Hallelujah! Thank you Lord for your written Word!

Victoriously,

