

# Jude

Small Books of the Bible - Jude

18<sup>th</sup> November 2007

## Introduction

*I heard a story once about two school friends. I don't know anything about what they were like as boys other than that they were good friends. At some point (perhaps when they left school) they lost touch with each other. One of the boys (now a man) had done very well for himself and had gone on to become a high court judge. The other had got in with the wrong crowd and sadly, had become a thief.*

*One day as the high court judge sat in his high seat and he began court, he noticed that the man brought to trial was his old school friend. The thief's crimes on this occasion didn't merit a prison sentence but they did deserve a hefty fine. But from the details that had come up in the trial the judge knew that his old friend would not be able to pay the fine and so would end up in prison anyway. Away from his family and children, not able to keep his job, not able to live a normal life. What was the judge to do? He is a judge, it's his job to make sure that justice is done. And yet, before him stands a man who is his friend. The judge knew that deep down he wasn't a bad man, he'd just made some bad choices. But the law is the law and the judge had to pass sentence. The judge fined the thief £10,000.*

*The judge then took out his own cheque book and made a cheque out for £10,000 and handed it to his friend.*

That story is an illustration of what Jesus did for us when he went to the cross for us. Because of our sin, we had a debt to pay. But it is a debt that there is no way we can pay. Like the judge in the story, God paid the price for us so as we could be set free. No longer do we have to carry the chains of our sin around with us, no longer do we have a penalty to pay, the price has been paid, we are free people. And it's better than that. Everything you've ever done wrong in the past and anything you will ever do wrong in the future has been paid for with Jesus' blood through his death on the cross. Such is the grace of God.

This is what the apostle Paul explains to the Romans and in Romans Paul has a hypothetical argument with himself. He argues that as sin increased in the world, so God's grace increased (Rom 5:20) He points out here that sin carries with it the penalty of death but that by God's grace we have been set free through the righteousness of Jesus and that grace gives us eternal life.

Then in chapter 6, still continuing this hypothetical argument, he says:

*“What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?” (Rom 6:1)*

In Paul's hypothetical argument he seems to be saying that if we sin God pours out his grace on us because he wants to set us free. Paul says that amazingly the more we sin the more God pours his grace out on us in order that we will not be slaves to sin but will be able to enjoy freedom.

Across the Mediterranean they were also having a similar argument but not a hypothetical argument this time. Some of the teachers here were teaching that Jesus' death on the cross had bought them freedom. That was true enough but they argued that this meant that they could do what they liked. Drunkenness, orgies, homosexuality, cheating, stealing, fighting, and in fact, practicing these things was bringing glory to God because it was a demonstration of their freedom.

Jude is a fellow Christian and wants to write to the Christians here about the faith that they share but then he gets wind of what is being taught and so his letter takes on a different tone...

[Reading: Jude](#)

### **Who was Jude?**

- Perhaps half-brother of Jesus – describes himself as “a brother of James”. This is thought to be not James the apostle but the James who was a half-brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19). Therefore Jude would also have been the half-brother of Jesus. It seems strange that he doesn't mention this family connection but instead calls himself “a slave of Jesus Christ”. – he is more concerned with the spiritual relationship than the physical.
- He obviously has some authority as he is writing this letter in a way that seems to be very authoritative. It has the feeling of being a letter of a church leader. Some believe he was a missionary (1 Cor 9:5) and was perhaps writing to his converts whose faith was being threatened by false teachers.
- Jude is the English translation of the Greek name Judas. Many scholars think that Jude could have been one of the brothers of Jesus called Judas.

### **Jude's Teaching**

Some, even today, believe that we live by grace and not by the law. People who think like this can also come up with a theory that it doesn't matter how we conduct our lives because we live under grace. (Paul challenges this in Romans – “should we then go on sinning so as more of God's grace can be shown? No,

that's ridiculous, if we love God then we should be trying our best to get rid of sin in our lives")

Jude speaks out against false teachers who are coming up with such theories. People who are twisting the Christian message to become a message of 'anything goes' – after all, Jesus paid the price for all you will ever do wrong so what does it matter? There is no condemnation.

### **The problems with this view.**

Firstly it is a perverted view of God's grace. It is turning God's grace into a licence for anything goes (based on the fact that it was an expression of freedom.

(v8) The false teachers claimed to have had dreams in which they received revelations from God. They used these revelations as justification for their evil actions.

Therefore, the teachers were just like Cain (the embodiment of violence, lust, greed, and rebellion against God in Jewish tradition), Balaam (who tried to make money by leading people into sin—Numbers 31:16; Deuteronomy 23:4), and Korah (who rebelled against God's authority in Moses—Numbers 16). They were also dangerous to the believers, for they were turning the meal, which was part of the love feast and Lord's Table (Eucharist), into an orgy (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20-22), and would thereby corrupt the practice of the rest of the church.

Remember they were saying that all of these things were an expression of freedom. Anything was ok because Jesus had paid the price and so therefore God would forgive it.

(v5) Jude reminds them that God's judgement is a serious thing. He reminds them that judgement comes on those that were once seen as God's 'chosen' (Exodus 32:28; Numbers 11:33-34; 14:29-35). Also the consequences of this could be eternal damnation (Genesis 19; 2 Peter 2:4-6)

For the false teachers, Jude says they are already there. (v12) Their fate is so certain that they are seen as being already dead and they produce only evil deeds. (v13) the reference to wandering stars means fallen angels (in Jewish tradition stars were considered to be angels). The next bit (v14-15) is a quotation from the apocryphal book of Enoch.

Jude 1:14-15 is a quotation from the book of Enoch 1:9.

- We shouldn't be surprised by that. Scholars think that Jude was probably written somewhere between 60AD and 100AD. The canon of scripture (The Bible as we know it) wasn't completed until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. At the time of Jude, many of the NT books wouldn't have yet

been accepted as being 'scripture' and many of the Jews would have used apocryphal books alongside the OT in their devotional reading.

- It is not surprising that Jude accepted these books as scripture but it is important to note that his teaching does not depend on these books.

(v17-21) Jude reminds them that the apostles (that is the twelve) told them that these things would happen but he says they are people who follow their own desires and cause divisions and who follow mere natural instinct because they do not have the Holy Spirit.

Jude then seems to be urging them to stay away from the things of these false teachers and says to them that by building themselves up in the faith and by praying in the Spirit, they are keeping themselves in God's love which will lead them into eternal life.

(v22) There are those who are influenced by the false teaching. Here Jude says to them to be merciful to those who doubt (those who perhaps are not sure what to think and so waver between one opinion and another). In a world where there is so much false teaching, it is difficult not to be influenced by some of what we hear. It can take an awfully long time to untangle the web of wrong teaching. Richard was telling me once that when he used to take secondary school physics lessons, he would often find that the first job he had to do was to undo some of the wrong teaching that had been taught in junior schools. But if Richard had gone in all guns blazing saying "stupid child" then it would have even further damaged them and certainly wouldn't have made them enthusiastic about science. You see, the children weren't stupid and they didn't have mischievous intentions, they were just wrong.

We have to be careful how we treat others who perhaps are sitting on the fence and even those who get involved in things that they shouldn't. Jude says we should hate the sin but we should love the sinner. We need to do everything possible to save sinners. Jude refers to this as "snatching them from the fire". But with a merciful attitude – always ready to accept them back quickly if they repent.

### **And what about our own sin?**

We will always struggle with sin but that is not an excuse for being sinful. These false teachers had twisted the gospel message to say that Christian freedom placed believers above moral rules. But they had missed the point. Jesus death on the cross was to bring us into a closer relationship with God. It was to allow us the freedom to be holy, not a freedom to do what we like and certainly not to be free to sin until our hearts content. Jesus did not intend for us to be given a licence to allow us to live even more corrupt lives – that's ridiculous. Living in that way takes us further and further away from God and the true freedom that He wants to give us. God's intention is that we can be free from these sins not to indulge in them more.

Perhaps sin is looked at in the wrong way. It is a way that we often still tend to think of sin. We sometimes tend to think of sin in the same terms as a speeding ticket. If I'm driving down the road at the pace of a tortoise (as the law requires) then I will be perfectly ok (albeit late) and the man at the DVLA is not going to send me a postcard. However, if I actually decide to drive my car in a way that actually makes the journey quicker than walking then one of those yellow boxes will flash at me and the man from the DVLA will invite me round for a chat and he will probably charge me for having my photo taken.

And that's how we tend to look at sin. We do something wrong and we get fined (or punished). God set up a list of rules that we have to obey. If we fail to obey these laws then He'll zap us. Only one day God woke up and realised that the list of rules was too hard for us but He's God, he can't just take the rules away. So instead he zapped Jesus instead of us, once and for all.

That paints a very bad image of God don't you think? Remember what happened when Jesus was crucified. The curtain that ripped in two. The once separated holy place was now open to all. The barrier between the people and God had been removed and destroyed. In Jesus death on the cross the barrier of sin had been removed from us and was put on Jesus and destroyed. That leaves us with no barrier between us and God. We are once again free to have a relationship with him.

The false teachers however were foolishly rebuilding a reinforced steel barrier between them and God again and they were encouraging others to do the same.

Perhaps we have false teachers around us. Many voices in society who are telling us that it's ok, God will forgive us. He's a loving God after all. Enjoy life to the full. But don't we realise, that's what Jesus came to give us. That was the whole point. To live in real freedom is to have no barriers between us and God. It cost God so much to achieve that for us. Let's not rebuild barriers that stop us living in freedom but let's enjoy the true freedom that Christ achieved for us. The freedom to enjoy a relationship with God.

### **Benediction**

How else could we finish today than to say:

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”