

Called

by C.J. Mahaney

C.J. Mahaney's sermon on Jude emphasizes the importance of God's sustaining grace and the call to contend for the faith against false teachings.

Duration: 51:42

Scripture: Jude 1:1, Jude 1:24-25

Topics: "Called"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the opening and introduction of a particular book in the Bible. He describes it as one of the sweetest and believes that it has a profound impact on our hearts and lives. The preacher shares his personal experience of being pursued by this passage and how it has affected him. He encourages the audience to approach the letter with anticipation, recognizing that God is at work through the reading of the letter. The sermon also touches on the theological concept of being called as a Christian and the significance of God's sustaining grace. The preacher expresses his desire to preach on specific verses in the letter that contain beautiful and powerful statements about God's grace, but emphasizes the need to first consider and contemplate the opening verses.

Transcript

Open your Bibles to what one scholar identifies as probably the most neglected book in the New Testament. Probably the most neglected book in the New Testament. So where should you turn in your Bible? What book would that be? What book do you think is the most neglected book in the New Testament? Well, certainly among the finalists would be Philemon, 2nd Peter, 2nd John, 3rd John, but according to this scholar, this distinction of being the most neglected book in the New Testament belongs to the book of Jude.

That is exactly right. And so that is where you should turn in your Bibles this morning. Turn to the book of Jude.

Scholars, the smart guys, they are a gift from God to us who serve us so well with their commentaries. They provide us with educated speculation on why this book is routinely neglected. They inform us that this book is routinely neglected because of its brevity, because of its emphasis upon judgment for false teachers who have infiltrated the church and are perverting the gospel and troubling the church.

It is a neglected book because of its severity in tone and content in the main body of the letter. All of that is no doubt true, but as Thomas Schreiner writes in his commentary on Jude, nevertheless, nevertheless, some of the most beautiful statements about God's sustaining grace are found in Jude. And it is those statements that have drawn me to this letter and it is those beautiful statements about God's grace are the primary reason I want us to consider this letter over the next two weeks.

So whether you are a mom or a mechanic or a manager of a business or a middle class high school or college student, whether you are male or female, whether you are married or single, it is my prayer this morning that the content of this, in effect, divinely inspired postcard from the past and the beautiful statements, they are beautiful, they are breathtaking, they are amazing, beautiful, powerful statements about God's sustaining grace. It is my prayer that the content of this letter and these statements would leave you freshly amazed, deeply affected, discernibly transformed. So let us give our full attention to this letter.

I will now have the privilege to read this letter in its entirety. And as I read this letter, I want to remind you, we are about to be once again, yet again, kindly addressed by God. I want you to be filled with anticipation that even as I read this letter, and particularly as I have the privilege to read this letter, God is at work.

I want you to perceive the activity of the Spirit. I want you to expect the gift of illumination as we have this privilege to read this letter and then contemplate the contents of this letter. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, although I was very eager to write you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation.

Ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now, I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels, who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, served as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet, in like manner, these people, also relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment but said, the Lord rebuke you.

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's era and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feast, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way and all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against them. These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loudmouth boasters showing favoritism to gain advantage.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourself up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire.

To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garments stained by the flesh. Now, to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

And the church said, Amen. For a number of years, many years, I have desired to preach a sermon on verses 24 and 25 from this letter. For in those verses, we find some of the most beautiful and powerful statements about God's sustaining grace in all of Scripture.

Verses 24 and 25 form this powerful doxology. But one truly understands and fully experiences the full effect of these verses only after considering some consideration and contemplation of verses 1 through 23. So, today, we're going to devote our attention just solely and exclusively to the opening verses of this letter.

And next week, we will consider the main body of this letter culminating, I believe, by God's grace, in our own worship experience as we contemplate verses 24 and 25. This morning, I want to begin by introducing you to the author or, more accurately, allow the author to introduce himself to us. Since the book of Jude is a most neglected book, the author is unlikely unfamiliar to you.

here's one thing you need to know about this author. The author of this divinely inspired letter is a modest man. He's a humble man.

It's not often you meet a humble man. I want to introduce you to a humble man. His name is Jude.

And his humility is apparent in the way he identifies himself in verse 1 and what he leaves unsaid about himself in verse 1. He identifies himself as a servant or a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. His brother James would be quite well known to the original recipients of this letter and well known to you as well. James would have risen to prominence in the early church as indicated in the book of Acts.

In Acts 15, there's a reference to his leadership of the Jerusalem council. Paul identified James as one of the pillars of the church in Galatians 2, verse 9. And, of course, you'd be familiar with the New Testament letter bearing his name, the letter of James. There's something else that distinguishes James.

James was the younger brother of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul refers to him in Galatians chapter 1 as James, the Lord's brother. And since Jude identifies himself as the brother of James, that would make Jude the

brother of Jesus of Nazareth as well.

But notice, notice in verse 1, Jude refrains from any reference to his family relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jude has been humbled by the realization that his older brother was the Word made flesh, the Sovereign One, the Savior. It wasn't always so.

Well, no. It wasn't always so. Prior to the crucifixion and resurrection, Jude and James were not, decidedly not, followers of their older brother.

However, early in the Savior's earthly ministry, we are informed in Mark chapter 3 that his mother and brothers came, quote, to seize him, for they were saying of him, he, the Savior, is out of his mind. They thought at that point he was insane. And the wise move was to get him off the street.

In John 7, we read at the outset of the chapter, the Jews were seeking to kill him. And then a few verses later, we come upon these words, for not even his brothers believed in him. But, obviously, since that moment, everything has changed for these guys.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we are informed that after the resurrection, the Savior appeared to Peter, and the twelve, then he appeared to 500 brothers, and then he appeared to James. And it appears that with that appearance, everything changed for James. Now, we're not given the specifics about Jude's conversion, but the genuineness of his conversion, the effect of his conversion is quite evident in the opening words of this letter.

Jude does not begin the letter referencing the privilege of his brotherly relationship to Jesus Christ, but instead, he accents his submission to Jesus Christ. He appropriately refers to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, or a slave. He is now identifying himself as a slave of the brother he once did not believe in and actually thought was insane.

So we are about to spend two weeks addressed, instructed, and exhorted by a modest man, a man who has been humbled by the gospel. And you must keep this in mind as we make our way through the content of this letter. Now, immediately following this humble introduction of himself, Jude provides us with a humbling description of the Christian in verse 1b.

to those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ. I must acknowledge, here's my tendency. At the outset of studying this letter, here was my tendency.

My tendency is to read over those words quickly, to pass over them superficially, wrongly assuming that those words in effect form or fulfill a polite ancient formality and greeting and no more. My tendency when I'm reading the letters of the New Testament with both the opening words and the closing words, my tendency is to avoid giving them their due attention. My tendency is to give those words actually little attention.

I have this tendency. I have the tendency to give the opening words of this letter and other New Testament letters the exact same attention I give the flight attendant reviewing the safety instructions prior to takeoff. I fly quite frequently and so I observe these individuals and usually for just a moment my heart goes out to them.

As I know, this is repetitious. This is monotonous. Some airlines seem to become even more demanding and scolding us, insisting that we cease everything to give them our full attention.

Of course, those of us on the plane are thinking just one thought. We know, we understand how important could this be. Who on the planet is unfamiliar with a seatbelt? There are a variety of thoughts that are going through our minds.

And so as the flight attendant informs us of these safety instructions, nobody's paying attention. Everybody assumes, hey, I get it. What you're saying is not important.

It's not significant. I want you to know there have been times I've been preaching where I felt like a flight attendant. I have.

I feel like I could hear people thinking, is he going to preach the gospel again? Doesn't he ever learn anything new? I've not felt that here. Never once, to my knowledge, have I felt that here. But I want to warn you about this tendency to assume these opening words aren't important and of the utmost importance.

Listen, these opening words, they form no mere polite formality. These opening words, these opening words, these few words are filled with theological substance. Jude has intentionally and strategically invested this greeting with the content of the gospel.

He is accenting divine action in salvation. He is revealing the grace of God and the love of God in salvation. He is anticipating the primary themes of the letter.

And he is preparing the hearts of the original recipients of this letter for the warnings and the exhortations that are to follow. The original recipients of this letter were troubled. They were troubled.

They were being unsettled by false teachers and false teaching. The gospel was being perverted. Their faith in the gospel was being threatened.

Some were even doubting the gospel. There was division and discord in the church. Jude is writing to address these most serious concerns.

And he is writing with an appropriate sense of urgency in and throughout the letter. His purpose for writing is clear. It's explicit.

Look at verse 3. Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you appealing to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints for certain people have crept in unnoticed. And they are perverting the grace of our God into sensuality. They are denying our only master, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the primary purpose of the letter. Contend. But notice, prior to exhorting them to contend for the gospel, Jude reminds them of the gospel.

Because this was preparatory for the warnings and the exhortations that await us in this letter. You see, if we moved prematurely to the main body of the letter, to the warnings and the exhortations that await us in this letter, those warnings and exhortations isolated from these opening words could leave the impression that ultimately the Christian life is dependent on human effort and endurance. And in order to avoid that impression, Jude reminds his readers at the outset of the letter, and he concludes the letter accenting the grace of God.

He reminds them of the gospel before he exhorts them to contend for the gospel. He, in effect, insists that we contemplate the gospel ourselves before we contend for the gospel. And that is exactly what we are going to do.

Sinclair Ferguson describes this passage, the first two verses in Jude, as, quote, one of the sweetest openings and introductions of any book in the Bible. One of the sweetest. And since it is one of the sweetest openings and introductions of any book in the Bible, here's what we're gonna do.

We're gonna devote the remainder of this sermon to this sweet introduction so that we might feel the full effect of this sweet introduction upon our hearts, so that we might experience the full effect of this introduction in our lives. Listen, this introduction pursued me. I'm preparing this message a few weeks back.

I had no intention of doing what I am about to do this morning. I remember Martin Luther said of the Bible, it's alive, it speaks to me, it has feet, it runs after me, it has hands, it lays hold on me. Okay, I know what that means.

This passage, this passage is alive. It's got feet. It's been running after me.

It's got hands. It has laid hold of me. It has said to me, you must contemplate me.

You must not move on prematurely assuming you understand me. And so I've given up. It's okay.

I'll do it. I was originally gonna do this all, this entire book in one message. Then I broke it down into two.

Still, this passage wasn't satisfied. No, I want this verse for the entirety of this. Okay.

Okay. To those who are called. Quote our friend Sinclair Ferguson again.

He has written that one of the most frequent one word descriptions of the Christian in the New Testament is that he is called. Let me ask you a question. How familiar, how familiar are you with one of the most frequent one word descriptions of a Christian? You need to be familiar with this one word description of the Christian because here's why.

Because if you are a Christian, this is why you're a Christian. This single word, this one word is the theological explanation for why you are a Christian. If you are a Christian, this is why you are a Christian.

And this one word reveals just a wealth of grace that should leave every Christian simply and totally amazed. Now, if you are a Christian, but you aren't presently amazed by the grace of God, perhaps you are a Christian who, well, amazing grace has become amazing grace. If you are in that state this morning, presently not amazed by the grace of God, well, perhaps it's because you aren't familiar with this one word description of a Christian, or perhaps you were once familiar with this one word description, but in recent months, you've neglected this one word description, you've forgotten this description of why you are a Christian.

Well, Jude, Jude, this humble man wants to remind you of the theological explanation for why you are a Christian so that you experience the full effect of this one word description, the full effect upon your soul and the transforming effect in your life. If you're a Christian, here's why you are a Christian. There is a one-word answer for why you are a Christian.

There is a one-word answer for why you're a Christian. And the relative you know is not a Christian, a co-worker you know is not a Christian, a neighbor you know is not a Christian. Here's the one-word answer called.

If you're a Christian, it's because you have been graciously and personally called by God, by God through the preaching of the gospel. If you're a Christian, you became a Christian because God called you. It's not because you were or are intellectually or morally superior to others who at present aren't Christians.

It's because if you're a Christian, it's because you received a gracious and personal call from God that you did not deserve. And this call is not to be confused with a general call to all, a general call to all for repentance and faith in the Savior. No, not to be confused with that.

This is personal. This is specific. This is effectual.

And this call is not to be confused with simply an invitation you've been given that just awaits your favorable response or your eventual decline. Now, the call that Jude is referencing here at the end of the letter, this is a divine summons. This is an effectual call.

Alec Mottier has written, it is not God's invitation to be saved. It is God's determination to save. See, this call reveals and accents the sovereign grace of God.

This call reveals and accents the initiative of God in our conversion. Jude is succinctly stating that divine action preceded human response. In effect, Jude is saying, before you came to God, God came to you.

And you won't be able to fully appreciate the nature and effect of these few words, this single word, the effect of this call, unless you understand to some degree the condition of your heart prior to this call. One really can only appreciate and celebrate the grace of God when one, to some degree, understands the nature and pervasive effect of sin. So, the condition of the human heart prior to the gracious call of God is described for us.

Don't need to turn there. In Ephesians chapter 2, with these devastating words, as for you, as for you, you, me, as for you, you were dead. You were dead in your transgressions and sin.

You were dead. Object of wrath. Justified object of wrath.

Dead. Dead. Unresponsive to God.

Prior to the call of God, we were dead in sin. We were dead in sin. We were dead because of our sin.

Prior to the call of God, we were not responsive to God. Prior to the call of God, we were hostile to God and we, in and of ourselves, were incapable of altering the condition of our hearts. Before you came to God, God came to you because if he didn't come to you, you would never have come to him.

Your conversion did not begin with you. Listen to Charles Spurgeon. He just has this wonderful way of making it plain for us and to us.

Now, the reasons why no man ever started the work of grace in his own heart are very plain and palpable. Firstly, because he cannot. And secondly, because he will not.

The best reason of all is because he cannot. He is dead. See, if you are a Christian this morning, it's because God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace, you have been saved.

If you're a Christian, your conversion was the result of God's gracious calling. That's not only the clear teaching of Scripture. Surely you can confirm that in your experience, can you not? Surely you can.

Surely you can. Surely you are aware that God initiated it all. Surely you are.

You didn't discover him. He revealed himself to you. John Calvin said, men do not anticipate God.

No, we don't. See, what Jude is saying is, let's retrace your conversion experience and let's consider who initiated it all so that we might freshly encounter God's love and be freshly amazed by God's grace. And Charles Spurgeon, no surprise, led his congregation, in effect, on a similar journey into their past one Sunday, as he preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England.

So on a particular Sunday evening, he very tenderly addressed his congregation with the following words. Let me refresh your memories with your calling. Was there not a day, the mementos of which you fondly cherish, when you were called from death unto life? Fly back now to the day and hour, if you can, and if not, light upon the season thereabouts, when the great transaction took place, in which you were made Christ forever by the voluntary surrender of yourself to him.

In looking back, does it not strike you that your calling must have been of divine origin? The text says God called you. Does not your experience prove the same? How gracious that calling must have been, since it came to you from God, came to you irresistibly, and came to you with such personal demonstration. What grace was here! What was there in you to suggest a motive why God should call you? Oh, beloved, we can hardly ask you that question without the tear rising in our eye.

Should not this calling of ours evoke our most intense gratitude, our most earnest love? Oh, if he had not called thee, where hadst thou been to-night? Who am I? What should I have been, if the Lord in mercy had not stopped me in my mad career? This was a kind and gracious call, when we consider what we might have. Let me lead you in the same exercise. Retrace your steps.

Go back to your conversion. If he had not called, the only thing I can say definitively, if he not called, I wouldn't be here. Would you have become, if he had not stopped you in your mad career? Listen, if it's been some time since you've teared up, felt and expressed intense gratitude and earnest love, perhaps you need your memory refreshed with your calling, because every Christian has this in common.

Whether your conversion appeared dramatic, like Paul's, or similar to Lydia's experience, described in the book of Acts simply as follows, the Lord opened her heart as she listened to Paul preach. Actually, every conversion is dramatic. Each and every conversion is a true miracle.

Actually, it's the greatest of miracles that we can experience. So no one is left out of this. So if we have any junior high, high school students present this morning who are thinking, well, I think I received this call when I was six.

Mr. Mahaney, I don't have your background. I did not passionately pursue sin, as I've heard you reference. And whenever you reference your past, I did not live the life you lived prior to conversion.

Thank God! Listen, here's what I would argue. If you experienced this call and you were converted at six, that's the more dramatic conversion. Oh, the dramatic conversion is the kid who can grow up in this church and be converted at a young age, so that that kid can avoid all of the sin that idiots and fools like me pursued and regret to this day.

I heard John Piper reference the following description of conversion by one of the elders in his church. When the elders in church testified as follows, the Lord saved me from a life of drugs, crime, and adultery at age six. May the Lord save a multitude of children at age six in this church.

And may they all grow up aware that their little hearts prior to conversion were just as dead in sin as those of us who had years to express that sin. And may they realize in a sweet way that God intervened in their lives, revealed himself to them, that their repentance and faith, which is an expression of grace as well, was a gift from God to protect them from the sin that so many of us are so familiar with. Oh, brothers and sisters, let's guard our hearts from growing familiar with and unaffected by sovereign grace as revealed in the call of God.

Because if you're a Christian, this is why you are a Christian. God called you. God called you through the proclamation of the gospel.

But, it raises a question. Why? Why would he do this? Why would he call sinners like you? What motivated him to call you particularly since you were dead in your sins and richly deserving his righteous wrath because of your sin? Well, it's as if Jude anticipates the question. God called you because he loved you.

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father, or loved by God the Father. Called, loved. One commentator just really in effect describes this whole passage as God the Father enfolding his arms around you.

It's exactly. Feel his loving, enfolding. He called you.

If you're a Christian, he called you. He stopped your mad career because he loves you. So listen, when you look behind the call of God, this is what you discover.

You discover the love of God the Father for sinners like you and me. Now, the original recipients of this letter needed this assurance and perhaps you do as well. I'm certain you do.

From my pastoral experience, many genuine Christians need the assurance of the Father's love. Actually, all Christians need this assurance, but I have interacted with so many Christians over the years who are not certain of God's love for them. They can be reluctant to admit it, but they aren't convinced.

They aren't convinced in their heart and mind that God loves them. Light of their sin and God's holiness, they aren't certain. They aren't convinced that God loves them.

Oh, they're effective in assuring other people that God loves them, but they aren't certain themselves. Tend to think of God as merely tolerating them. He's often frustrated with them.

Oh, he's quick and eager to discipline them. And perhaps you are one of them. If you are one of them, then the Father would like to have a word with you.

I've benefited from, as have many, church history, the greats in church history, those who have served us as scholars, biographers, introducing us to men like Spurgeon and Edwards and Luther. And I particularly benefit when the biographer introduces me to the humanity of the man and his struggle with sin and temptation. I find hope as I study these men and realize that there are similarities, that in the midst of their pronounced gifting, that their temptations are common to all men.

One of those individuals who's had a profound influence on me is John Owen. And perhaps you'd be surprised to learn that John Owen was in need of an assurance of God's love. John Owen's books populate our bookstores.

He's one of the dead guys in the bookstore who you can meet, and he will teach you. And his, again, teaching has had a profound effect on my life. I would encourage you not to start with Mr. Owen per se.

Let somebody introduce you to Mr. Owen. Read Sinclair Ferguson's book, John Owen on the Christian life. Read this book, J.R. Packer's A Quest for Godliness, The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life.

Read Kelly Capik's book on communion with God as he introduces us to the theology of John Owen, particularly as revealed through that profound book. Let me just introduce you to Owen just briefly here, create an appetite for the man so you can appreciate why I'm even drawing reference to him in this regard. Dr. Packer writes, the Puritan John Owen, who comes closer than anyone else to being the hero of this book, was one of the greatest of English theologians.

And in an age of giants, he overtopped them all. Spurgeon called him the prince of divines. He is hardly known today, and we are the poorer for our ignorance.

At age 12, Owen went to Oxford. Okay? That's how bright he was. Actually, it was an unusual combination of brilliance and athleticism.

He threw the javelin, participated in the long jump. Usually, that combination of brilliance and athleticism doesn't take place in the life of an individual. John Owen was unusually blessed, at least that's in my experience and observation.

I know a lot of smart guys who aren't coordinated. I do, and I'm grateful for that. That's why they studied, which is the best way they can serve us.

They shouldn't be out there playing games. That was for fools like me. Listen to this about Owen.

In his early 20s, however, God showed him his sins, and the torment of conviction threw Owen into such turmoil that for three months, he avoided the company of others, and when addressed, could scarcely utter a coherent sentence, and slowly, he learned to trust Christ. It appears that over a five-year period, five years, if Mr. Owen were here today, I think he would say, those were five very long years. Those years seemed eternal.

For five years, Owen was not certain of God's love for him. It tells the story of finding his way to a particular church to hear a celebrated preacher, and so similar to Spurgeon, the celebrated preacher did not preach that day. An unknown preacher preached that day.

That man's name has not been known to this day, and in the midst of that preaching and the passage, he experienced an assurance. He experienced the love of God the Father in a way that altered his entire life.

And when you read Owen's writing, this is why I'm bringing him to his attention in particular, he has this wonderful personal pastoral sensitivity to those who, he would say, have an improper view of God the Father.

See, Owen speaks not only from pastoral experience over the years as he encountered individuals who weren't certain of God's love, but he speaks from personal experience having a five-year period where he wasn't certain of God's love. So you will find in the writings of Owen, he's very concerned about any and all Christians who would have an improper view of God the Father. He will follow that with his concern that too many Christians, listen, think hard thoughts about God, hard thoughts of God when they think about God.

He talks about how Christians are often reluctant to think good thoughts about God the Father. And then he talks about how prior to conversion, it is understandable that an individual would be aware of the wrath of God. That individual should be aware of the wrath of God.

But he had a concern that after conversion, the perception of God the Father as exclusively wrathful endured in the heart of a Christian. That there were emotions, he wrote about, that persisted in the heart of a Christian in relation to God being wrathful, angry, distant. And so there is this improper view of God the Father, thinking hard thoughts whenever one thinks of God the Father.

Emotions that persist, assuming that God is angry and distant. And so in and throughout his writings, Owen would consistently seek to come alongside and introduce a proper view of the Father, to banish those hard thoughts of the Father, to replace them with good thoughts of God as a gracious and loving Father, so that those emotions of God as angry and distant did not persist, but instead they were replaced with affections for this Father. And that is Jude's burden, who are, listen, this is not optional.

This is critical. So let me ask you, are you uncertain about the Father's disposition towards you? Listen, if you are, if you're uncertain about the disposition of the Father's heart towards you, it will affect everything. It will affect everything.

Until you have a proper view of God the Father, you will hesitate to hold communion with the Father. Until you have some understanding and are growing in the Father's love, you'll be vulnerable to introspection, to legalism, to condemnation, to despair. Until you have some grasp of the Father's love, your life will be characterized by the distinct absence of joy.

Listen, Jude wants the original recipients of this letter to have a proper view of God the Father, and more importantly, God the Father wants you and I to have a proper view of him. He called, he summoned sinners like you and me through the preaching of the gospel as an expression of his electing love, determined before the creation of the world. And all of this happened with a very personal and particular affection, so that every Christian can humbly say with certainty, I am loved by God the Father.

Every Christian can say that. Every Christian should say that. Every Christian must say that.

And if as a Christian you do not say that, then you grieve. You grieve the one who does indeed love you as God the Father. So it's no surprise that John Owen would write, and this is a paraphrase of what he wrote, the greatest sorrow and burden you can lay on the Father, the greatest unkindness you can do to him, is not to believe that he loves you.

For the Christian is the greatest sorrow and unkindness. It would be the greatest sorrow and unkindness in light of his love for you, and in light of what he has done for you, and in light of what he has done within you. Again, to quote our friend Sinclair Ferguson, he said, how many of us will get to the throne one day and with a twinge of regret say, if only I had known you were this gracious? You don't have to have that twinge of regret on that day.

You can know today he is this gracious. All Christians are to be certain that they are loved by God. Now listen, don't look within yourself to find reason for this love.

Don't make that move, because it doesn't exist there. If you make the move internally, all you'll find there is sin and a reason to discipline and judge you. Don't look there.

No, stop it now. Don't do it. Look away from there.

Jude intervenes and in effect says, look away from there and look to a hill called Calvary. Look there. For there is no demonstration that can exceed that display and demonstration of the father's love for sinners like you.

And he looked there. And then look behind there to the father who initiated it all. Sent and sacrificed his only begotten son and crushed him with his righteous wrath so that by grace he could call sinners like you and me through the proclamation of the gospel as a means of revealing his love for sinners like you and me.

To those who are called, loved, called by God the father, loved by God the father, and kept by God the father for Jesus Christ. I just pray the rest of this day, the rest of this week, the rest of this month, the rest of your life, those three words. It's all about divine action.

All about divine action. It's not a denial of human responsibility at all. We're gonna get to human responsibility.

We'll read later in the book, keep yourselves in the love of God. No contradiction here at all. It's just we're not talking about human responsibility in 1B.

1B is all about the divine action. In 1B we're just being dazzled by the grace of God. That's what's going on here in 1B.

Now we don't have time to explore this but the good news is we're gonna be exploring it next week in more detail. What a sweet assurance this would be for the original recipients of this letter. Okay, what a sweet assurance.

This is a troubled church. The gospel is being perverted in this church. False teachers have infiltrated this church.

So imagine you were a part of this church and someone who you were converted with and had grown close to now doubts the very gospel they once received and responded to. It's a troubled church. It needs assurance.

Jude says, everybody give me eye contact. Listen up. All of you who are genuinely converted, you have been called by God the Father.

You are loved by God the Father. And God the Father will keep you, protect you, and preserve you from all dangers, both doctrinal and circumstantial. He will protect you and preserve you from the influence and the effect of sin.

He who called you will not abandon you. And this will make all the difference in your life. Listen, if you're Christian, here's why.

God the Father has sovereignly and graciously called you. He has sovereignly and graciously called you because he loves you. And the one who has sovereignly and graciously called you because he loves you promises to preserve you for Jesus Christ.

That's a divine perspective of divine action in the life of a Christian. And that perspective affects everything and changes everything for the Christian. Yeah, let's close just thinking about this.

That perspective, listen, that perspective transcends your circumstances at present or in the future, however difficult it does. That perspective transcends those circumstances. Whatever adversity you're facing, whatever suffering you're experiencing, this perspective in 1B, this divine perspective, it will transform your heart.

This perspective transcends those circumstances, and this perspective will transform your heart in the midst of suffering. Just ask Jordan and Tally Coughlin. If you see them, ask them.

Ask them about the difference this perspective has made. Because just a few days ago, they found out that their little boy, Jack, has leukemia. Privileged the other day to visit them.

And when I walked in the room, observed them, and interacted with them, I sensed immediately the divine perspective at work. Oh, are they sad? Yes. Are they grieving? Most definitely.

Was there crying? Well, certainly. But the distinct absence of any and all complaining, and the distinct presence of trust in God the Father, because they are certain, He called us. He loves us.

He will keep us. That's the difference this makes. So, let me ask you, what are you worried about? This past week, what are you worried about? You just fill the blank in.

What do you fear? What are you worried about? What do you fear? This perspective transcends that, and will transform your heart in the midst of whatever adversity you encounter in this life. Better news simply does not exist. Better news does not exist.

This divine perspective makes all the difference. You have been, if you are a Christian, called by God the Father, because you are loved by God the Father. And the one who called you and loves you promises to keep you.

So, called reference to the past. Loved, present. Future, kept.

Good to go. So no wonder in verse 2 Jude prays for mercy, peace, and love to be multiplied. Yeah, that's right.

Let's pray that all that was revealed in 1B be multiplied in the lives of the original recipients and in our lives as well. You can't improve on that prayer. We need to pray because only God can do this.

But we need to be assured from what we read that God is eager to do this. Eager to provide this. So, we end with a contemplation.

Prior to the call to contend, we must contemplate. We must contemplate the one who has called us because he loves us. We must contemplate this promise to keep us.

And, if you are not a Christian, and I am sure there are a number here who aren't, then we are honored you would come. And if you're not a Christian, it could be. I'm thinking, God may be calling you even as I preach.

And, if he is, here's what his clear command to you is today. Turn from your sin. Trust in his Son.

For those who are Christians, may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you as you contemplate the call of God the Father, the love of God the Father, and the promise of God the Father to keep you. Amen.

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