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SPEAKER

Dave Owen

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Standing Firm

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Good morning to you, Providence. It is good to see you. My name is Dave, one of the pastors here and have the joy to be able to teach you this morning. We do want to encourage you as we have been studying through the book of Jude that not only encourages us to contend for the faith but to continue to grow in your faith. We believe one of the greatest ways to do that is to be able to understand how God has gifted you with spiritual gifts. Maybe some of you are leadership, personality even assessments, and this morning at 11, that's going to take place at the gathering. It's an incredible opportunity to really understand that and then to be able to get plugged in somewhere where the church could utilize you, but also you'll be full of joy. I think it's when you find the niche of where you're gifted to be able to serve, so encourage you to consider that.

If you have a bible, we want to encourage you to take it and turn it to the book of Jude. If you don't know where that is, go to the end of Revelation, Revelation's last book of the bible, then take a hard left, and it'll be that last book right before Revelation. If you don't have a bible, there's one under the chairs. Love for you to take that and look at that. If you don't have one, take it home. That's a gift from us to you. And if you're a guest with us, we are so, so glad you're with us. If you're live streaming with us, we say, "Good morning," too. So here's what we're looking at, the book of Jude. We're in our third week of four weeks. Weighty book. Jude was the half brother Jesus meaning that Jesus was born of virgin Mary and Joseph, and then Joseph and Mary had more kids, and so there's Jude. And They ended up, didn't believe in Christ. Jude didn't until the resurrection, and after the resurrection, he did, and he took a stand for his brother and what he had proclaimed, the message he had proclaimed.

And it's really interesting because Jude, he writes in verse three that he's eager to write about our common salvation, but he couldn't do that. He wanted to just maybe celebrate that, but he felt it was necessary to write appealing to them to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints, the message of the gospel, the fidelity of the gospel, the exclusivity of Jesus Christ and what Jesus has said. Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the light. No one comes to God the father except through me."

Some will say, "That's a narrow-minded message." When I survey my heart and the depravity of humanity, I'm shocked there's even one way to be honest with you. I'm just shocked God hadn't wiped us all out because the way we have turned against him. And so Jude, knowing there is one way through Christ, he writes... And listen, this morning there's some verses that we're going to look at. You don't put these on a coffee mug. These aren't on the paper weights in your office. They're not framed and put the dining room table. Some of you, maybe it's the first time you've seen some of these verses. So I'm so grateful to be able to ask God for help. Let's go. Father, we need your help. Please help us, God. We know eternity is too long to get this wrong, and so teach us, please, God, this morning. We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

Verse 11 of this small letter. Verse 11, "Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error 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 for ever. 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 of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage."

So grateful for [Brian 00:06:08] giving me this text to preach. If you're live streaming, Brian, I love you, brother. False teachers he's addressing. They're so dangerous because they can be among you, and you can't see them. The book of Jude serves us like an MRI. When you have a disease in your body, you can go for some time not feeling anything until you get sick, and then the MRI determines maybe something on the lung or something in the body. And Jude, in once sense, is a spiritual MRI allowing us to look deeply within rather than without. The external attacks against Christianity, you can at least see them. You can see the Richard Dawkins of our day, the outspoken atheist from Oxford University who debates Christian leaders on the existence of god. You can see. You know where he stands. Jude would say, "No. False teachers, they creep in among you. They're like the termites under the house. You can't see. They just slowly eat away the truth of god's word."

And what false teachers do to individuals lives is what happened to this street in Japan recently with a sinkhole. When you see this, it's devastating. Because what's fascinating, the day before the sinkhole took place, everything looked as if it was okay. People crossed the street, cars drove, and then in a moment like that, it gives way. And this is your life if you build it on false teaching. It's a matter of time before it collapse, and we at Providence and Jude would desire that you and I would never encounter a spiritual sinkhole in your life. And so how do we contend for the faith and grow in our faith? God's going to compel us, I believe, through this letter this morning with three things. Here's the first one; God compels us to look back and remember devastating decisions from the past. He compels us to look back and remember devastating decisions from the past. Romans 15 will tell us that all of scripture, all of it, Genesis to Revelation, was written for our encouragement. Specifically, Paul's writing Romans and looking back at the old testament. And so hindsight is 20/20.

There's a reason we say it's 20/20. It's much clearer to look back to see what happened rather than look forward and ponder what may happen, and Jude knows that if we could look back for a moment, it could help us to move forward with care. And so he starts this portion of the passage with these three words, "Woe to them." Who is them? It's the false teachers. He's saying, "Woe to them." Usually when god says woe to anybody, it's not good. He says, "Woe to them! For they walk..." and then lays out three old testament examples of those that have ways that were religious. They were religious. That's what the whole scary part of this text is. They were religious, but they weren't following god. They were far from god in their hearts. They talked about god with their mouth, but they were far from god in their heart. And so let's look at these three.

The first is this, is the way of Cain. The way if Cain was a self-made religion. What do I mean by that? In Genesis four, we see the story of Cain and Able. Cain and Able have brought a sacrifice to God. God required a specific type of sacrifice, and Cain actually offered the sacrifice on his own terms. He offered something different than what God has asked, and God did not receive that. What Cain had done, he wanted God to accept his way of religion based on his preferences, based on what he thought God should accept. And this is what all world religions do; they sit at the bottom of the mountain. They sit at the bottom of the mountain and they all ponder the top of the mountain where God and his holiness lives, and they say to one another that all of us are going to end up at the top. It doesn't matter which way you want to go. You can go any way you want. This is what all the world religions will say.

Christianity in the bible says something specifically different. The bible says there's actually no way you and I can get to the top because he's so holy and righteous, and we're not. And so on your best day, on your best day, you won't get close to a holy god. Oh goodness. This is why Christianity says, "He, in his kindness, came down to us," because he knew we couldn't get up to him. And he came down in the form of a man named Jesus Christ, and he lived a life you and I could not live, and he died the death that we deserve. And he, because of his righteousness, allows us to come to God. Again, some would say this is a narrow-minded message. I'm shocked there's even a message to talk about. Oh listen, self-made religion is empty and it leads people to hell, and it causes such bitterness in your heart that you actually kill other people. This is what Cain does. He kills his brother.

See, listen. Proverbs 14 says it this way, "There is a way that seems right to man, but it's end is the way to death." There's a way that seems right. It seems right to say in our day and time what itching ears are longing to hear. It seems right, but it could be wrong. Often times, I don't know why i do this, but sometimes I'll call churches in our city and survey. I'll get started reading about the exclusivity of Jesus. Not arrogant, oh no, humbled. Humbled that there's even a way, and I'll ask, "What do you believe about Christ? Do you believe he is the only way to God?" And one particular church close to my house could not answer it. They would not answer it. Oh, they answered it in another way saying, "All ways lead to God." So I called this particular denomination, call their head office in North Carolina, pondered it with them, kindly, humbly asking, "What do you believe, because you're appointing pastors multiple cities in our state. What do you believe about the gospel of Jesus Christ?" And they would not give a clear definite answer on the exclusivity of Jesus.

So I called their national office in New York City. New York City [inaudible 00:14:57] over the phone. Said, "What do you believe about this book?" They wouldn't answer it. "Kindly, would you consider closing down, please?" "Kindly, would you consider closing down?" If the word church, you open the bible, and you say, "This is what it says," and it doesn't say that, and that's misleading hundreds, thousands to hell. Gut-wrenching. Listen, the way of Cain is a self-made religion. It's not what the bible teaches. The second is the error of Balaam. The error of Balaam was greed. Look at what the text says. "Abandon themselves the sake of gain." This is a interesting story, so say with me. Numbers 22 to 24, if you want to read it, read Numbers 22 to 31 in its entirety. But you have this king of Moab. Moab was an area in the middle east that was to the West of

Israel, and the king, Balak, bribes the prophet Balaam with money, with gold. He sends some of his best people to persuade him, to curse Israel, to pronounce a curse on Israel, to lead them into idolatry and immorality so that God would judge them, and this king, Balak from Moab, could dominate the region.

And Balaam's inclined to this. He's inclined to that, because gold was his God and money was his master. So he's inclined to this. And what happens, he's on a donkey riding, and down the road, there's an angel of the Lord appears, and the donkey sees it before Balaam. God allows the donkey to see it, and the donkey goes off the road, down out into the desert, and Balaam the prophet starts beating the donkey. And the donkey starts talking to him. Right then, I'm going to pause. I'm going to time out. What's happening in this situation? What happens is that the donkey says, "Listen, so an angel of the Lord..." Actually, the donkey says, "You've ridden on my back for so many years. I've always listened to you," in essence, "So please listen to me at this moment." So the donkey actually prophesying to the prophet in a sense. And eventually, you see that the eyes of Balaam the prophet were open, and he sees.

Think about the danger of greed for a moment. Numbers 24, Balaam prophesies about a star and a scepter who, is prophetic language pointing to the messiah who is the sovereign one who would rule, who is the star in a sense. You can prophesy and make promises about the messiah with your mouth and not embrace it with your heart. It's so dangers, isn't it? Greed would do so much to his heart. It's fascinating story, because the sovereignty of God did not allow a curse to come upon among his people, but it ended up just being devastating so much so that God killed him in Numbers 31. Listen, Matthew six says it like this, "No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money." Think about that statement for just a moment, Providence, this morning. No other item does God give equal playing field for himself, for affections for himself, than he does money. He gives us a lot of credit to it, that it has power over you.

Let me tell you how this shows up in our day and time. It shows up with many in our culture preaching not a biblical gospel, but a prosperity gospel. And what a prosperity gospel means is that they, those false teachers that preach this, say you need to sew a seed of finances, and you sew this amount of money, and God's going to do this 10 fold back on you. And for him, and anyone to stand and say that, I say that is heresy. The most godly person in this room who gives the most could die of cancer tomorrow. Don't know. You don't manipulate God saying, "I'm going to give this amount, then he's going to give that." There's principles in God's word of faithfulness and stewardship and those things, but when you see the TV ad, and they say, "Sew this amount," and they don't even know you. They're going to send you a handkerchief that's been dipped in the Jordan River to wipe your forehead with, and then you're going to be healthy and wealthy, that's not what the bible teaches.

The most righteous man on the planet, they killed. 11 of his followers, they killed. The majority of your brothers and sisters in Christ are persecuted. This is not normal Christianity in the world. Drinking a latte, listening to the bible, going to Chili's for lunch. That's not normal Christianity. The majority of Christians are going into church underground two-by-two so they don't get shot this morning. Listen, let me give you a quick theological category for giving, because we ask you to give. You are generous. You're amazing, generous people. We're sending a bunch of college students to London and Philly, and we have a team in Thailand right now. We want to send and plant churches all over the world. It takes resources to do that, but we want the resources to be given from a place of love for God for what he's one, not to manipulate him to do something for you.

Listen, Psalm 50. Listen to this psalm. Psalm 50 says, "I," God talking, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountain, and the insects in the fields are mine." And then look what he says. This is awesome. "If..." If, that's a big if. "I were hungry..." By the way, God is never hungry. "If I were hungry, I, God, would not tell you, humanity, for the world is mine, and all that's in it." I think that's clear. Doesn't need your finances. He owns Chipotle. Everything you eat there, he made. The chicken, the avocado, the tomato, the onion. Everything, he calls to grow. So he doesn't need it.

Listen, sometimes, I don't know if I recommend you doing this. I've tried it a few times. Doesn't go well. But when I was watching TV some time ago, and I saw one of these false teachers saying all this stuff. They have an 800 number at the bottom. So I called the 800 number and share the gospel with the operator. I would encourage kindly and humbly. Don't do that with arrogance. Please don't do that with arrogance. Do it with brokenness that they're misleading so many people. Be kind, but share the gospel with them.

Oh listen, it's the error Balaam. There's also the rebellion of Korah. Oh my, Korah. Who is this guy? This guy is in Numbers 16, and he has roles and duties in the tabernacle. So he's doing work for God and doesn't know God. This is dangerous. Listen, he's irritated because he wasn't chosen to be priest and could carry that title. Oh my. Oh my. He found more security and satisfaction in a title rather than knowing God, and this is so devastating that you're not content with being a child of God. You want a title so people think you know God. Look, this is what titles will do to your heart. If you set your heart on that title as being ultimate, and you attain it, you get the title you want, it's not going to satisfy your heart. And if you set your affections on this title, and you don't get this title, you're going to be crushed because your identity is wrapped up in actually what others think about you, and it's devastating. It never goes well.

Oh listen, only in Christ will you find full satisfaction because the affirmation of your value and worth is shown and displayed in the fact that he was crushed for you. Oh my, listen. The rebellion was so devastating that God opened the Earth and swallowed Korah and 250 of his followers. The power struggles, and his influence was so strong that even after... Look, if the Earth... Oh my, I would hope I would believe this. If the Earth opened up in front of me and I saw 250 people get swallowed by that, that I would turn to

God, and yet, there's a sense of identity and entitlement of wanting to be liked so much that 14,700 people that were sympathetic for Korah actually grumbled against Moses and the leaders, and God raised up a plague and wiped them out.

What a fun text this morning. You encouraged yet? Listen, false teachers always persuade division rather than unity. They always do. So let's be a people who look back in hopes of avoiding devastating decisions moving forward. Let's learn from our old testament.

Number two, God compels us to learn. He compels us to look back, but he compels us to learn, to learn about deception from the realm of nature. Deception from the realm of nature. Notice what happens in the next two verses. It sounds like Jude went poetic on us with some of this language. He starts off, he goes, "These..." Again, these who are the these in sentence is the false teachers who aren't clinging to who Christ has said he was. And so he goes like this. He says, "They are hidden reefs." What in the world is a hidden reef? Let me show you a picture. This is a hidden reef. It's under the water, and above the water, everything looks good. But under the water... I promise you, if you dive into that, it's going to hurt. It's unseen danger, and this is what false teaching is. It's unseen danger, and what's so unique about a hidden reef is that if a boat hits that and it punches a hole in it, it doesn't go under the water instantly, it takes on water and eventually, this will happen. Eventually, you will sink. And this is what's dangerous about folks that just sit under and in places where they don't teach the bible, and the exclusivity of Jesus, and worship Jesus, and love Jesus. It's going to eventually sink your life. It's unseen danger.

He says it's like a waterless cloud. What in the world is he talking about here? You're a farmer in the Midwest, and the land is dry, and you're out there. Maybe you're praying, and these clouds show up, and you need rain, and you are extremely encouraged when you see these clouds, but equally discouraged when the wind blows them and not a drop falls. This is what false teaching does. It looks promising, but it doesn't deliver. It looks promising, but it doesn't deliver. Proverbs 25 says, "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give." Notice he says fruitless trees. What is this? This harvest time, imagine working the farm. I used to farm growing up. I loved it. Remember, farming and working and anticipating the harvest to come, and you work and you till the soil, and you driving the John Deere, you're fertilizing, and at the end of the time, nothing. Nothing at all. Fruitless trees. This is what false teaching does.

What's sad is you can sit there for a while and think you're being fed when you're being drained, and there's no fruit in your life. Doubly dead. What is this? I think this means that it's uprooted, and it's dead at its core, and it doesn't produce any fruit as well. Notice the next one. Wild waves. What do wild waves do? Like this picture, they just toss. They crash. There's no anchor. They're just taking you from one wind of doctrine to another and from one cultural thought to another, from one sense of deception to another. It leaves you drowning in a sea of confusion. Waves crash and so will false teachers at the end. This is why Proverbs 18 says that the name of the Lord's a strong tower. It's a strong tower that can withstand these waves and the wind. When it blows, the house is not coming down when you build it on Christ as the cornerstone.

Wandering stars. What are wandering stars? They're shooting. You've seen a picture of them. They're amazing. They're gorgeous, but they flash across the sky out of control into darkness, and this is what false teachers do. They're flashy. They're easy to listen to. They build your self esteem, and never mention sin, death, a cross, blood, or hell. Never. Let's be a people who learn to discern deception. It is dangerous.

And in last, number three is this. "God compels us to listen to his word and repent for ungodly deeds will be judged." He compels us to listen to his word and repent for ungodly deeds will be judged. This is a hard word. It's a hard word, but there's some hope coming. So hang on. Listen, Jude is quoting, let me deal with this really quick, from a non-biblical source, First Enoch. It's in the [inaudible 00:34:05], not in the bible. And I believe what he's doing is he is affirming the truth of a statement found in First Enoch without endorsing the whole book as authoritative bible. Paul does this in Titus. He does it in Acts. He does it in first Corinthians, and I believe if God can speak through a donkey in Numbers, then I believe he can speak through historical documents that make true statements. And his point is really simple as one theologian say. It's no new information here. The Lord's returning and judgment is coming. The Lord is returning and judgment is coming. Look at what judgment is coming for. Four times, he says the ungodly. Ungodliness, ungodly, ungodly, and all, all who follow, all who teach, all is all. And there's no escape from God's judgment except one way.

Oh my. Oh my. Listen, Jesus would say in Luke 12, "Don't fear those who will kill the body." Do you hear what he's saying in that statement? "Don't fear those who martyr you for following Jesus. Fear the one who, after you've been martyred or murdered, then has the power to cast your soul into hell. Fear him." Listen, the way... And by the way, here comes the good news. The way you escape the coming judgment of God when you die is to embrace while you are still alive the one who has come and taken the judgment of God upon himself, being nailed to a cross and drinking the full cup of God's wrath. That's how you escape it? That's how you escape coming judgment is that you embrace the one who has already come? His name is Jesus the Christ, the son of God, fully-man, fully God, who took on God's wrath and drank every drop of it.

And listen, if you're a believer and you know that, and that doesn't stir affections for Christ, I would encourage you to repent. If you're more excited about some sports team in this area or political thing or some other thing, then God's wrath being drunk at fullness on a cross by the son of God, party's off. Party's off. Did it not crush you like it crushed me two weeks ago when a helicopter crashed into the side of a hill in California? It crushed me. I coach my daughter's basketball team. I played ball in school. It humbled me, because it reminded me death is no friend of status or age. Death is no friend of either one of these. Humble you like it humbled me, and look to the savior. Look to the savior while you're still alive.

Let me address this really quick. This messes me up. Let me address this. Many will say, "That's not a loving message." I can't think of a more loving message. Judgment of God's coming? Yes, but there's a way you can escape it. That's the most loving message I've ever heard. Some will say, "That's not loving, preach God's judgment." No, what's not loving is not to tell you about it. That's what's not loving. What's not loving is to tell you "There's a man who has come, and he lived a perfect life, and he took on our sins, was crushed on a

cross, buried in a grave, rose from the dead, and when you place your faith and trust, you don't have to earn it. When you trust him, his righteousness is given to you and your sin is given to him, and there's a promise for eternal life with God." That's the most glorious news you will ever hear. If you move from this city and you go to another church and they don't say something about the resurrection and sin every single week, get out.

What's not loving is not to tell others about this. Can you imagine this sign on your street at home when you drive home day? Can you imagine this sign? You want this sign on your street if the next picture is true of the street in your neighborhood. You want that sign. What's not loving is to remove it, and if it's not there, you would run out of the car. You would wave your arms and you would try to stop every single car, because it's loving to do that. How much more? Second Peter says the Lord is patient. Oh, thank you, God, for your patience, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone called to repentance. And so this morning, I want to encourage you to repent and trust Christ.

To repent means you say, "I'm sorry, God. I'm sorry. I've got self-made religion. I'm greedy, lustful, all of it. I'm sorry, and I turn to you." That's what it means. "I turn to you and trust in your sufficient work on the cross, and I believe that you raised Christ from the dead, and I commit my life to you." That's what it looks like. You can say those words even at this moment in your heart and be born again. Oh my. What a glorious good news. Let's repent and trust Christ this morning. If you've never trusted him, please trust him this morning. Let's run to those who haven't trusted him. Three billion people in the world over the pond have no idea that judgment can be escaped. Oh, may we go. And let's read his word. Let's be a people who eat this book, drink this book, consume it so we are not deceived by false teaching.

Let's pray. God, oh God. What a weighty text this morning. And God, even in the midst of the weight of thinking and even envisioning thousands of angels coming with you to execute judgment, that there's a way to not taste that. And so with heaviness of heart, there's also some amazing joy going on in our emotions to know that you have rescued us many, and would you rescue more even this morning, God? Please, open eyes to see the glory of your son this morning. Please, God. Only you can do it through the message of your son. So accomplish it, we pray, oh, God. We're so grateful, God, for your kindness to us, and as even in this time as we give and seeing, Lord, you stir our hearts once again with affections for the savior. We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.



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