



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

April 7/8, 2018 - Jeff Bucknam

**Called, Loved, and Guarded Slaves - (Jude 1)**

**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

I have some shocking pictures to show and they're shocking, and there's a reason I want to show them. You could probably say that the history of the 20th century was really formed by certain images that were created to describe certain groups of people. So in the middle of the 20th century we have World War II, and around World War II was really the first proliferation of propaganda, in fact the Nazi's had a guy, Joseph Goebbels that was his job was the propaganda minister of Germany at the time. When I was in college I had an entire class on Nazi propaganda and some of the images that they used to describe the Jews were shocking. You have to come up with, if you're the Nazi's, you have to come up with a way of describing people in such a way to make them subhuman so that you can go and gas them, right? And so this was the job actually of the propaganda ministry, to describe their enemies, and specifically the Jewish people in that kind of way. So what we have today on the internet and other places, we have these examples of images that were utilized by the propaganda ministry in Nazi Germany. Here's the first one that I'm going to show you, it was very common for them to describe Jews as rats that they were the vermin, the pestilence of the country. Here's another one, this one they are a virus, so you can see in the little circle there the Star of David. "If you look under the microscope of our society you will see that most of it is healthy except for this one, wicked virus that needs to be exterminated." Here's another one, this is just pretty blatant. They're monsters the Jewish people are monsters who are trying to eat you, it's difficult to send your neighbour who you've known for years to the police, the SS, who are going to come. It's difficult to report them, but if you can think of them in this way, in these images it's much easier for you to think, "Yes, I'm actually doing my civic duty to send them away because they're monsters, or virus, or rats." And that's what you do with rats, you gas them, you gas a virus. I don't want to say that the Nazi's were the only ones who utilized this, in fact propaganda war in World War II is pretty all encompassing, every country did it. My country, the United States, similarly, so Japanese people were all around and they had to justify sending them to internment camps and that was a bit difficult for some people. So they utilized certain images for the Japanese that were not at all like them but this is way that they pictured them. Here's one this is very common one, maybe one of the most famous propaganda pieces from World War II coming out of the US. Japanese are animals, they're apes, they're coming to take your women, and if you don't go and fight them on the shores of a Guadalcanal and other places, then they will come and they will steal your women away just like the animals they are. This is the last one, I want read this one to you. So this is a picture supposedly of a Japanese, it's stupid, horrible picture of a piece of lice, apparently is the way they understood it. The writing on this says this,



“Louseous Japanicas, [just listen to the way that they describe them, the Japanese, the Americans describe the Japanese] The first serious outbreak of this lice epidemic was officially noted on December 7, 1941 in Honolulu [so it’s Pearl Harbour]. To the Marine Corps, especially trained in combating this type of pestilence, was the sign, the gigantic task of extermination. Extensive experiments in Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan have shown that this louse inhabits coral atolls and the South Pacific particularly pill boxes, palm trees, caves, swamps and jungles. Flame throwers, mortars, grenades and bayonets have proven to be an effective remedy but before complete cure may be effected the origin of the plague, the breeding ground around Tokyo must be completely annihilated.”

It’s power in imagery, I mean I’m not kidding, politicians utilize this all the time. “If I can compare my opponent to some sort of evil, or some sort of animal that nobody likes, or something like that then I can win, by just having people picture him or her that way.” Language like that, images like that are formative in the way that we understand people.

It also works positively too, right? I mean if you end up talking about people in positive ways it can actually form positive actions in them. If you have a person in your life who struggles with an eating disorder, the challenge that she or he is having is that they look and they see themselves and the imagery they have in their mind about themselves is not accurate and so if you can repeat to them what is accurate over and over and over again, perhaps there’s a chance that they would change their mind. You know this when you call your daughters princesses. You want them to think of themselves in a royal way, and it probably has taken us way too far and now they think that they’re princesses unfortunately. You do this with your little kids, if you want them to run a race really fast. When my little boys were really little and we had this game in baseball where they had to run around the bases and whoever won... I’d say to my son, “Run like a cheetah!”

“A what?”

“A cheetah, you know, like cheetah!” My son would be out there going for it... a cheetah. “Eat like a piggy,” right? Six month old doesn’t want to eat the food <oink, oink> you know, make a piggy noise. Blow your nose like an elephant <makes elephant noise>, “Go for it!”

“Oh ok, <attempt at making elephant noise>.” It forms, it motivates. Images can motivate, they can derive, but imagery has a power, a formative power.

It’s important to know when you come to scripture because the Bible *loves* to use, God *loves* to use imagery to describe Christians, to describe his people. Because he knows that it’s more motivating than just describing facts about them. So in this passage, the beginning of the book of Jude, what you have is Jude, in the first verse, giving you four images of Christians. How should you think about yourselves, as Christians who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are the four that are there, you should think yourselves as *slaves of Jesus Christ*, *the called ones* is the second one, *loved in God*, *guarded for Jesus*. All those verbs and nouns, the Greek behind them is picturesque. I want to spend the next few minutes of our time together trying to just go through those and show you what kind of pictures are supposed to come to mind when you think about these things and how that ought to form the way you live and think about your life as a Christian, okay?



Like I said we are starting a new series in the book of Jude, it's only 25 verses long. Jude himself was a brother of Jesus. Jesus had four brothers. They were not believers prior to the resurrection. Cause like typically brothers I assume, they were like, "My brother's nothing special." And then he was risen from the dead and they connected the perfect life and, "Okay, yes." They come to faith in Christ after the resurrection, James, Jude, come to faith after the resurrection. And they turn into missionaries. Jude is a missionary, he's a church planter. And he writes this letter to some church plants that he'd established and he wants to write letters to them you know encouraging them, this is the way you do it. You write back to the church, "Hey, love you and remember the stuff I taught you and isn't it wonderful." He wants to remind them and celebrate together with them the salvation that they commonly share. But he's realized that after he's departed there's a bunch of false teachers who've come in behind him and they're teaching bad doctrine. So he has to write now to these people and say, "Contend for the faith guys! I want to celebrate our common salvation but I can't in this moment because we have to contend, we've got to fight for the faith or the church will be no more." So it's a book filled with discussions of false teaching and the contours of false teaching and so in our day of lots of false teaching it's a very appropriate book to talk about. So I'm excited for it, but before we get into the book proper in the coming weeks I do want to deal with this first verse and these images.

### **[Slave of Jesus]**

So here's the first of them, I said there were four, here's the first. We are slaves of Jesus Christ. I'm only going to be reading through one verse every time, okay. It's the same verse, Jude 1,

"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:"

"Jude a servant of Jesus Christ". A number of years ago, I speak at conferences from time to time and one of the things that they do, a number of years ago, I was speaking at a conference and they didn't list my formal title before my name. They called me Pastor Jeff Bucknam, they called everyone else who spoke at the conference, Dr. so and so. And I corrected them, right? I know totally stinky of me. But I stood up and said, "Why are you guys calling me pastor, I actually have an earned doctorate. You should call me doctor." There are titles that you have, things that you think of yourself as, you go to a party and you meet some people and they say, "Tell me about yourself," and you say, "I am Joe, and I ..." what do you fill in there. "I work as a..." or "I am the wife of..." or "I am the son of..." Usually the thing you pick is the thing you're proud of, you know, the thing you want to be known by. What does Jude pick, I mean here he is starting his letter to these people. They know him but what's his title. What's his degree? Well he's a brother of James, he says right? Which is true and James is one of the leaders of the church and so this probably gives him some sort of like, "You should probably listen to me, my brother's a pretty important guy." But he's a *slave* of Jesus, isn't that interesting. He's also a brother of Jesus, doesn't call himself a brother of Jesus, he calls himself a slave of Jesus, which is not something you choose to say about each other, right? "This is my brother, I'm his slave." Now in the Bible that we just read, in the New International Version, it says, "servants." Trying to soften it a bit, but the Greek word is actually *doulos*. It's the Greek word for slave. And the reason they softened it is



probably because they know what comes into yours and my mind when we read slave in the 21st century North America. Like we're immediately thinking, "Wait a minute, if you're a slave and then Jesus is your master, is Jesus the kind of master with the whip in his hand? Trying to whip people on aboard a slave ship coming from...you know... Northern Africa to the new world. Cause that's what we think of slaves, and I don't like the idea of Jesus being that kind of slave. Jesus as an oppressive ruler in that way?" So the imagery is kind of messed up in our minds. But that's not the imagery that Jude is appealing to, he lived far before that. He's appealing to imagery from the Old Testament. In fact he's probably appealing to Exodus 21:1-2, 5-6, listen to this language and image of slavery. Exodus 21:1-2,

"Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. [God speaking to Moses for the people of Israel. Set these, Moses, before the people of Israel. These are the rules.] When you buy a Hebrew slave, [so one of your own] he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing." [You can only have him for six and then the seventh year he's done]

Exodus 21:5-6,

"But if the slave plainly says [in that seventh year], 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free [My life here under submission to that master is better, I trust that master's plans, wisdom, decisions for my life, more than I trust my own ability to care for myself. If that's the case],' then [verse six] his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever."

You've taken your kids teeth, you know you tie the rope to it, you shut the door [spitting sound]. This is basically, you are supposed to go to the doorpost and do something like this. You're supposed to instead put the guy's ear, hope they have big earlobes, and take an awl, shut the door [whack]. Now you've got a sign, you're marked as a slave of that particular person. Why? Because you chose to get involved in it out of love for the master. So when Jude is using this image of slavery, this is the image that he's trying to show you. He's saying, "Listen if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, just like I am, you are a slave, you are a bondservant of Jesus. You volunteered to submit to His authority because you know that he's better at your life than you are." You play with that image a little bit, I mean I'm sure there were times in these houses, in these ancient days when they had to go and they had to purchase something. They had stores and things like that, they had places they bought stuff from merchants, maybe shops at the market. You can imagine the slaves, with a fist full of dollars. The master says, "Here I want you to go and I want you to buy these three items." He goes to the store and he's got his hand, he's ready, he's got his coins in his hand, he's ready to pay. And he sees behind the counter, he's got the three items that his master wanted, and he sees behind the counter, I don't know, a kite... see I would be drawn by a kite. And he says to himself, "I would love a kite, I have money, I know it's not what the master called me to do with the thing he's given. But I have money and I could buy that kite." And he pictures himself in his future about how happy he would be flying a kite, being free. And yet he knows that he has a command from his master to buy this other stuff. So he's facing a crossroads at this moment right? Choice to fulfill his desire for his life and a choice to fulfill his master's desire for his life and everybody else's. And so what is the thing that is going to motivate him to choose



the master's way. And the answer according to that passage in the image itself is his confidence in the character of the master. He chose to get involved in this because he loves his master and trusts his wisdom. What's going to help you choose in those moments of decision between going your own and your vision for your life, or submitting yourself, denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus. There's confidence in the master, and his character. You really believe that he knows best and he has a special care for you, you will go his way. You're a bondservant, we are bondservants, slaves of Jesus Christ. John MacArthur, he wrote what lovely little book called, *Slave*, he said it this way,

"True Christianity is not about adding Jesus to my life, instead it's about devoting myself completely to Him. Submitting wholly to His will, and seeking to please Him above all else. It demands dying to self and following the Master, no matter the cost. To be a Christian is to be Christ's slave."

So there's the first image.

## [The Called Ones]

Here's the second one, the called ones. Jude 1,

"Jude, a servant [or a slave] of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To *those* who have been *called*, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ."

So he describes his audience, these Christians in these churches as those who have been called. Now I need to do some theology with you for a minute alright? Excited? Okay, last service like one person said, "Yeah." So I'll talk you, alright. So theologians make a distinction in the scriptures. If you go through the Bible especially in the New Testament one of the things you'll find is that God calls everyone but he doesn't call everyone [laughs]. Let me explain that, they make a distinction between what's called, the general gospel call, "Repent and believe everybody." We are supposed to go out the doors of our church and we are supposed to proclaim that, I'm supposed to proclaim here, "Everybody!" It's a call for everybody to repent and believe the gospel. But that call is only effectual for some. And so they say there is the gospel call, the *general call*, and then there's the *effectual call*. And that's not for everybody. That's for those for whom it is effectual, those who believe. So you can say that God *calls* everyone to repent, but he *calls* only some to repent.

Now I know this is often people are like, "What prove it." Okay, here we go, I'll just show you some, some of the ways, why it is that theologians all around the history of the church have always held this view point. It's not hard for me to show you the general call, but for the sake of clarity, you get passages for example like Matthew 22, it's a story that Jesus tells, it's about a king. It says the kingdom of God is like this, there's a king and the king wants to have a wedding feast, and so he invites all his nobles and his important people in his household, people he knows. He says, "You come to my wedding feast." And those people respond by saying, "Ah, I've got other things to do." They don't come so he then takes that call, that invitation and he says to his messengers I want you to go to every streets and corners, and the bars, and everywhere and I want you to invite *everybody* to come. Just go



out and invite all of them. To come to the wedding feast of the king. And so they do, the messengers go out and there are several who come in. So the night of the wedding the king shows up and he looks around and he sees all these people who've responded to the call but there's somebody there who is not dressed in wedding clothes. And he goes to the person without the wedding clothes, and he says, "You came to a wedding without the wedding clothes, you're unprepared for what you're called to, so get out." The idea of course in the parable is that if you come to God without faith here you're going to get kicked out. But at the end of the parable Jesus says this phrase, little pithy phrase, Matthew 22:14,

"For many are *called*, [there's the word] but few are chosen."

You get the idea, many are called, everybody's called, the invitation to follow Christ goes out into the world, generally. It is the gospel that is being proclaimed in all places. "I command all people everywhere to repent." says Jesus. Yes, everyone's called in that sense. But it's *effectual* for some. So here's a couple of passages that point that direction. 1 Corinthians, so I got two different passages here, 1 Corinthians 1:22-24,

"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, [so Paul's trying to interact here with the problem that when he preaches the gospel there's a whole bunch of people who don't believe it, and the barrier in the way for Jews is that they want signs and for Greeks, for Gentiles, "No, no, no, we want wisdom, we want your statement of this gospel message to fit kind of our preconceived notions of what's wise in the world. But it doesn't, because we don't believe in crucifixion and a bloody death of God and all that kind of stuff. That's ridiculous, that's nonsense, foolishness." So Jews demand signs, Greeks look for wisdom] but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [that's why they don't believe] but to those whom God has [what] *called*, both Jews and Greeks [right, there's some within the Jewish people group and some within the Greek's who've been given this gospel call, this general call who will respond. To those whom God has called], Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

So you see the distinction, there's a general call, but it's effectual for some. You see the same kind of thing in Romans, I said there was two passages, here's the second one. Romans 8:28,

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, [now I have to ask you, does everybody love God? Everybody on the planet, well no they don't. The promise that's given in Romans 8:28, And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love him, it's limited to that group, those who love him. They're also said to those] who have been *called* according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also *called*; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

There's a group who are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified. They are Christians. Now listen there is a whole bunch of debate theologically on how it is someone gets called. But there's



agreement among almost everybody that they should be called, the called. So God calls everyone but he doesn't call everyone. And why is that important? You are like, "That's a fun theological treatises. Why's important?" Well because if they *have been* called, that's a passive, if you've *been* called it shows that salvation is not something you've figured out. Your salvation, your belief in Jesus is something *instigated* by God. "Salvation is of the Lord," says Jonah. And that's right, the reason you're in the church is not because God looked down and thought, "Wow, I really need that person on my team." It was because he opened your eyes to believe the message. Now I'm using that language because it's precisely the way that Luke uses the languages in the book of Acts to describe how this one particular woman, Lydia, comes to faith in Jesus. It's a different way of talking about coming to faith. But it's certainly the way that he understands it. So you have this story in Acts 16:13-14, and here's how it reads,

"On the Sabbath we [we being Paul, Luke, the writer here, and a bunch of others, we] went outside the city gate [this is in the city of Philippi and we went] to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. [So they heard a rumour that maybe there's a bunch of people around the river who are kind of Jewish and they're praying down there. So they go to the river on the Sabbath day.] We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira [when you read Thyatira you should think, New York, or maybe Florence or Milan, like really expensive, snooty, you know hipsters love it, kind of places, okay? Thyatira] named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. [So fashionista, runway, not model, but designer. Purple cloth was what they used for royalty in those days and was very expensive. So she deals in the finest of linens. Very wealthy woman down by the river. She has a kind of belief in God, it says,] She was a worshiper of God [meaning that she was on the edge of the Jewish synagogue. She was kind of on the fringes of the Jewish religion, so kind of acquainted with God, but not a believer yet.] The Lord [then so she comes to faith in Jesus, this is how Luke describes it. The Lord] opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."

So if you come to Lydia after the fact and Luke is standing next to her, and you ask her, "Hey how's it that you came to faith in Jesus? What happened, why is that you believed and all these other ladies maybe didn't?" Luke's answer to that is well because the Lord opened her heart to believe the message. This is how everybody comes to faith in Christ. It's how I came.

I was like ten years old sitting at a Bible camp, that I didn't even know how I ended up at, my sister kind of showed up there once and said, "Can I get a job?" And they gave her a job, probably against their better judgement. But she started going there, my mom thought, "It would be great if we had a week away from the kids," she said later in life, and so she sent me and my sister to this camp. And at the end of the week, I have been around church and stuff, we'd go to church but not really seriously and stuff. But I'd been around church enough, I'd heard the stories about Jesus and stuff, never really took. Honestly I didn't care. I remember sitting in this auditorium with these steps, I remember there was green shag carpet on them. They were steps that you had to sit on, right, there's no chairs, it was just big steps with green shag carpet going all the way up. They called the room the Forum. At the bottom there was this man talking and have you ever sat in a meeting or a place where the speaker that you're listening to, you're just hanging on every...single...word. I'm 10 years old and I've never been interested



in anybody speaking publicly before, ever! And this guy's talking about the death of Jesus, describing it, and I am honestly, I am crying, I've got tears coming out of my eyes as a 10 year old and thinking to myself, I'm next to my friends who I met that week, and the goal of 10 year old boy is to be cooler than the others. And I got tears coming down and I'm like, "Ah, come one, why is?" The first time in my life I prayed, "God make it stop." You know. But I could not keep my eyes off of this man and picture what he was describing about Jesus. My friend's sitting next to me and he's playing with the shag carpet and he's looking at me going, "Dude you're crying." I'm like, "I know, why aren't you?" Finally at the end he does what lots of preachers do, "Would everybody close their eyes and bow your heads, if there's anyone here who sees that what Jesus did for you is take your punishment so that you wouldn't have to have it. That all of this was for you and that his love for you is so great. That he has stood in your place and now he calls you to come. Anyone like that, would like would you just raise your hand?" I got to tell you what, my hand went up faster than any, like I almost stood up like this, and my friend who is peeking, typical, he's got his hand over his eyes, he goes, "Dude put your hand down, this is stupid, put your hand down." I couldn't put my hand down. Why? So why in this setting, he's hearing the same message I am, he couldn't care less and I do care at this moment. And the answer Biblically to that question is, God's called you. Now I'm not saying he's not going to call this guy at another time, I'm not going to say he's not going to open his heart at another time. But both of us if we come to faith in Jesus, anyone who's a Christian should attribute their salvation to God and his work. You're called, it's a humbling thing, you're not better than anybody else. You're just the object of grace.

### [Loved in God]

So he's a slave of Jesus Christ, called, here's the third one, loved in God. Jude 1,

"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are *loved in God the Father* and kept for Jesus Christ:"

Now that's a weird way of saying it isn't it? Loved in God, don't you expect loved by God. Isn't that what we say all the time. "God loves you. You are loved by God." But Jude doesn't use that language here, he uses loved in. You should be asking, "Why would you use 'loved in God the Father'? What happens when you add *in*, in a phrase with love?" You know what happens. I invite a young woman over to our house for dinner, she's a single woman, and my wife and I are there and we're going to serve your dinner and stuff and get to know her. And she walks through the front doors and she bursts it open and she says, <starts singing>"I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love, I'm in love."<ends singing> You are like, "Uh oh." What do you assume? You've met somebody, and it's not just somebody, it's somebody who you have an intimate relationship with. I love my dog, I'm *in love* with my wife. It's not the other way around. Right, if I came here and said, "I'm in love with my dog." You would go, "What?! You're fired." [laughter] Because you know instinctively that adding *in* to a phrase with love in it, it intensifies it on an experiential level. I *feel* something when I'm in love. I dance and I sing about it when I'm *in love*. And this is the idea that Jude is trying to get at here. He changes the language cause he's trying to say look, "Before we begin any of this, any of what I'm going to talk about you just need to understand that God *feels* something for you. He's awfully *fond* of you. He has an experience of love. You are loved in God."



Perhaps the best way to compare those being loved by God and being loved in God by this one commentator made the comparison he said look it's the difference between maybe me saying to my little girl, Sophie, "Sophie I love you," and me grabbing Sophie and taking her up in my arms and spinning around and whispering in her ear as we spin round and round, <begins whispering>'I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you'.<stops whispering> See there's an experiential difference that's going on there. She knows the facts about love if I just say it to her. You are loved by God, but if I wrap her up in my arms and I hold her, "I'm in love with you Sophie." There's this great verse in the Old Testament, Zephaniah 3:17. Woah there's a lot people that haven't read it, you should, this one you put on your mirror okay. Commit this one to memory. It's spoken to the people of Israel certainly by implication it applies to God's people of any age. Ready? Zephaniah 3:17,

"The Lord your God is in your midst a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

Have you been with people who are rejoicing over their kids in gladness? They're the people, they're instagram people, right? And you get tired of it, you're like okay I've seen your kid before, like five times today. Stop it already, I get it, he's cute. These are the people who used to, before the time of smartphones, be the people you kind of wanted to avoid in the church. "Oh have you seen the new pictures of my grandchild, have you seen the new pictures of my child?" "Mmm ummm, yes I have and I don't want to see anymore of them."

This week actually Jonathan Giesbrecht, our worship pastor here, he sent around a video of his son who is pounding the table and singing some song. He doesn't really form his words very well, much like his father. [Laughter] He was pounding, singing, "Wahh bah goh dah, dah." I saw it on instagram I got it emailed to me by Jonathan and then in the office he came to me and said, "Have you seen the video of my kid?" And I was like, "Uh huh, [laughter] I have." But there's kind of, you see what he's doing though. He's *delighting* in his child. Everytime he sees it he laughs. Everytime the pictures of the kids, you feel something. You know their background and their joy in the moment that that was taken and you feel this joy in your heart. This is what God feels when He thinks about you. He rejoices over you with singing. If you came to my house you'd hear me sing about my daughter all the time. I call her all sorts of goofy names, right? <singing>"Little Sophie Grace, you're the silliest face." I make up songs all the time, why, because I feel something for my daughter. You see God feels that for you.

That verse, Zephaniah 3:17, there's a book written about it. I totally recommend it, it's by a guy named Sam Storms. It's called *The Singing God*. The whole book's about that verse and about what would happen if you actually believed that to be true about you. It starts with an interview or an illustration that he uses about a counselling appointment, he's a pastor, a counselling appointment he had with this woman named Susan. Susan's father was a very rough man. He was very verbally abusive, at times physically abusive. He's love for his daughter was dependant largely on how thin his daughter was, how good she did in school, how pretty she was on that particular day. And if she wasn't those things he would let her know. "You're too fat, you're too dumb, you're too ugly, step it up." So like she grows up with this horrible self image. This picture in her mind about herself. And she lives to it, she's a complete mess, her life's going down the toilet, her family is a mess, everything. So in this counselling session between her and Sam Storms, Storms starts to think, "You know what you need? You need to



understand what God thinks of you.” So he turns to Zephaniah 3:17, he reads it over and over again to her and this is how she responds. Especially to the part at that end. “He’ll exult over you with loud singing.” She responds,

“‘God sings? He sings over me?’ After a few moments of shocked silence, tears begin to well up in her eyes and eventually stream down her cheeks, [writes Storms] ‘But I’m so pathetic,’ she protested. ‘I really am, I’m 30 pounds overweight. I’d die if anyone saw the state of my house right now. It’s almost as messy as I am. My husband’s furious at me again, I can’t do anything right. And you say God sings over me with joy? I doubt that very much! More likely He’s screaming in disgust! My dad used to say that, he used to scream at me with disgust.’ So I read the passage again to her, and then again and then again assuring her that it indeed was a description of how God truly feels. Her tears then returned, ‘If I could only believe that were true,’ she said. ‘I think then I could almost face anything. If only it were true.’”

I’ll tell you in all my years of ministry the one thing that I think most Christians need to hear more than anything else is that God is awfully fond of you, like he likes you. He doesn’t look at you and think to himself, “Ah I wish I would have called somebody else.” He’s delighted, he sings over you. Dances around his house when he thinks of you. You are *in* the love of God. If only you’d believe it though.

### **[Guarded for Jesus]**

There’s one last one here. It’s one that’s going to be kind of carried on for the rest of the book. But it’s an important one, guarded for Jesus. It’s the language that I used. The end of Jude 1,

“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and *kept* for Jesus Christ:”

That word means guarded, it’s the kind of thing you do when you have a very important item that you don’t want anyone to touch. Maybe a prisoner, you put them away in a prison cell and you set guards around them. Trip wires everywhere. When I was reading this and was looking into some of the background, I was thinking, “You know this is very similar, the idea that Jude is trying to get at here is very similar to other guarded things in our world.” You know the most guarded building in the world, that’s a good trivia question to ask later. “What’s the most guarded building in the world?” But now I’m going to give you the answer so you’ll be able to show how smart you are. It’s the US Depository at Fort Knox. The reason it’s guarded is there’s two hundred seventy billion dollars of gold bars there. So like yeah good place to steal stuff from probably. There’s also apparently the Roswell Aliens there, so you could steal them too? [Laughter] If you wanted to steal something from Fort Knox though, here’s some of the barriers. In your planning, there are three concentric circles of fences, electrified fences, there’s a satellite dedicated, dedicated satellites that see the entire yard between these fences and land mines between them. There’s cameras on every corner of the building and guard posts stationed at each corner with those cameras, with the satellite array, and all those things all contributing to the guarding of it. If you’re able to get through there you know, I don’t know Matrix style, and you get to the walls of it, the walls are four feet thick with granite, lined with cement, steel, and fire proof material. They say that



can withstand a direct atomic hit. But no one's tried. "Ah I'll go through the windows," you say. Well they're bullet proof, fire proof and blackened. The front door itself is 22 tons of blast proof material. It can only be opened by about five different people who have separate codes that are switched several times a day, randomly. They all have to enter the codes all at the same time in order for the front door to open. "Oh but I know the movies, I'm going to go through the tunnels." The tunnels are laser guarded and will flood at any motion. It floods regularly when rats run through them. There is *no way in* and *no way out*.

The point here, this is the kind of image that's supposed to come to your mind. Ok you're faith is in Fort Knox and you are being guarded by God the Father *for* Jesus Christ and there's nobody who's going to be able to stop him from completing what He's begun in you. That's why you have in the New Testament all sorts of language like, Jesus is saying, "No one is going to snatch them out of my hand." "He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it."

"What shall we say in response to these things, if God is for who can be against us? I'm convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come, nor *anything else in all creation* will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Don't you hear, like the Bible just keeps peppering you with, "Look I'm going to guard you. I'm going to keep you no matter what, you might feel like you're prone to wander. But I'm going to keep you there. Set my guards around it." There's no way in, no way out. This is really an important point as we go in this book, because this book's about a bunch of people who left the faith. It's a bunch of teachers who decided to abandon the faith and how they're trying to draw other people with them. So at the very beginning Jude's just trying to say to you. "Listen you might get worried as you read through this that you might not make it to the end of the race. But I got you. I'm guarding you."

This is going to be a lot of fun. Seriously you need to come back, I think this is going to be a lot of fun. There's going to be a few weeks in here, I'm more excited than you. But you know, you will be excited as you go.

Let me pray for us. Father I'm so thankful for your word and the images that are used here. And I pray Father that they would be formative for us. Would you help us to see a right, who we are, what we are like. Help those ideas to bounce around in our minds Father and have an affect on the way we live we pray. In Jesus name, amen.