



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

May 12/13, 2018 - Jeff Bucknam
How to Contend - (Jude 20-23)

[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.]

What I have not found encouraging is what's gone on in my mind over the last number of weeks as we have been studying this book, because I have been thinking about dear friends of mine who, at one stage or another in their Christian lives, have committed themselves to following Jesus and sound doctrine, standing on the shoulders of all those who have come before them, but for whatever reason, usually because of the voice of somebody who's falsely taught them, they have abandoned the faith they once held so firm. One of those guys, good friend of mine who I haven't talked to in a long time, but he was the son of one of the pastors I worked with in New Zealand. I got to know him quite well, he came over to my house a bit in kind of a mentoring relationship, we read through the Bible together, he was in a community group with me, kind of a young adults theology study, there was about seven or eight students in that. And we would sit weekly for years talking about theology, talking about the nuances of the faith, and yet he, after time, decided that he wanted to go off to a Bible college. At that point he went off to Bible college, the national school in New Zealand, and very committed to following Christ's call on his life, thought he might actually be in full time ministry, he was in his mid-twenties when he decided to go there. I heard from him about four months after he had gone, we talked on the phone, and he started to tell me about one of the professors he had at this school who had started to change his mind quite a bit about a number of different doctrinal issues we had talked about in the past. He said, "Jeff, he reads the Bible so differently from you." And I was like, "Woah, okay," I mean, listen, there's lots of different ways we can talk about when it comes to that, but some of the stuff he was describing to me theologically is stuff that has led people off base in the past, and so I told him, "Listen, do me a favour, give me a right of reply, at least send me some of the questions or issues," so I didn't really hear from him much. Four months later I talked to him on the telephone, and at that point it was really cold conversation, very distant. Certainly no interest in talking to me about some of the theological things that he had come to understand. He said that he was barely hanging on to the faith. Well, that barely hanging on ended up becoming an abandonment altogether.

I saw him years later in another country, in fact, he had married and he had moved there with his wife, and they had stopped going to church, they had stopped being involved in Christian things for the large part. I think about him a lot of nights, actually, when it's dark and quiet, and his face comes through my mind. Every pastor has got regrets, and that's one of my big ones. Was I not proactive enough? Did I not engage enough? I think that at that point in time I wasn't as committed to being forthright with him as I probably should have been, huge regrets. You know, the longer I've been in



ministry, twenty-some years now, full time ministry, the longer I've been in ministry, the more of those examples I could cite to you. We could spend the rest of our time together and I could tell you story after story, in detail, of people who once held firm to the faith, and now have walked away from it. Usually because they've listened to some false teachers, somebody who has drawn them away to another doctrine. I've come to actually think that the Christian life is like you're in a boat, and you're traveling across this body of water and you're trying to reach safe harbour, and between you and that safe harbour is a reef-filled, kind of mine-filled kind of danger. And those who have gone before us have charted a path that will work, that you can follow and you can reach that destination. They are the great cloud of witnesses who cheer us on and say, "Follow this way. It is worth it, it is right, we reached it, you can reach it to." But along that path, there are so many that are veering off the path and running into waters and shipwrecked, all over the place. I start to wonder, I mean, what is my responsibility as a pastor toward the people that I serve in this regard? How can I help you stay in the faith? And how can I help me stay in the faith? I'm not the only pastor in the world, and certainly not the only one who's been in danger of these sorts of things, there's lots who have gone before me who have abandoned the faith, even though they used to preach it boldly. How do we contend for our own faith? And how do we contend for the faith of our friends?

[How Do We Contend for Our Own Faith?]

So Jude, in his book, has been talking about these false teachers all the way along. They've been giving characteristics of them, and at this particular point in the book, Jude 20, he changes his attention to those two questions. Number one: how do you contend for you? And number two: how do you contend for those you love? So those are the two headings I want to study this under. Look at Jude 20-23, how do we contend for our own faith, and he says,

"But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."

So there's a main clause there, a main idea, if you could chart it on a white board and write that sentence out, the command in that passage is keep yourselves in the love of God. And the other phrases explain how you keep yourself. But the main point is, "I need you to keep yourselves in the love of God." Now that's a really interesting phrase, and here's why. If you go back to Jude 1, listen to what it says. So in Jude 20 he's urging you to keep yourselves but in Jude 1, he says,

"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..."

So in Jude 1 he's saying that you are kept, so God is the subject, he keeps you, and you are the object of his keeping. And in Jude 20, you are the subject and you're supposed to keep yourselves. So which is it? Does God keep you or do you keep you? Yes is the answer. Because in Scripture, what you'll find is for every imperative there's a prior indicative. For every imperative, for every command,



there is a prior indicative, a statement of fact. I'll give you some examples of what I mean by that. So in other places in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:8,

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.”

So the command is to *live* as children of light, but on what basis? Well because you *are* children of light. Statement of fact drives the command. Another one, Philippians 2:12-13,

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [exclamation point, that's the command] for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

So you should do this, you should be energized in your activity toward following God, with fear and trembling he even says. But God's the one who works in you to will and act according to his good pleasure. You're not alone in this, that's the point. God doesn't just give you commands and say, “Go, do that, and I'll just stand here and watch.” He says, “No no, I'm going to fill you, enable you, change who you are, so that you're able to fulfill this command.” This is very important. For every imperative in Scripture there is a prior indicative. So in this passage, the command to keep ourselves in the love of God is built upon the fact that God will keep us. He's saying, he's sitting in your boat and he's saying, “I promise you, because you are my children, that I will never get out of this boat, and I guarantee, on my name, that I will reach you to the safe harbour. And I know there are reefs all over the place, but I will get you there. I promise.” So our response then, in that moment, is what? As we're sitting in the boat and he says, “I promise to get you there,” we're like, “Oh good.” Then we just go take a nap? “Oh great, let go and let God.” No. You put your hands to the wheel and you follow his voice. You continue down the path, right?

So there's a great movie, it is a great movie but it's from the 80s, so some of you are like, “I don't want to hear about it.” But listen. *The Hunt for Red October*. Great movie. Everyone over 40 is like, “Yeah, that's right.” Sean Connery is in this movie. <In Scottish accent> A theme in here is he doesn't react too well to bullets. <normal accent> Okay? So Sean Connery is in a nuclear submarine, he's a Russian sea captain, and he is taking this submarine and he's bringing it to the United States because he's going to defect with the submarine, because the submarine is a secret submarine that you can't track anywhere and it can launch its missiles from any location. So he's going to bring this war machine to the United States. Well, he's got the entire Russian military on his tail, he's even got some of the U.S. military on his tail because they don't know what he's actually doing, and so he goes, in one section of the movie, through this chasm, this canyon underwater. And he says to the driver of the boat, “Listen, I'm going to stand over your shoulder and I'm going to tell you where I need you to turn. You need to listen very carefully to every mark I give you. When I say mark and turn this degree left, you do that. Immediately. Don't ask questions, just do that. And I will get you safely to the other end. I'm a really good sea captain, I'm going to get you to the other end, just follow it.” So they start going down the path, some of them start getting worried and they say, “Do we turn yet? Do we turn yet? Do we turn yet? No, we've got to turn, we've got to turn.”

“Just wait, wait wait. Mark! Turn!” And they do this all the way, and they finally make themselves through. Right, that's a great image. That's what the Lord is doing, “I guarantee you I'm going to get you to the end. I'm going to keep you. So you keep yourselves.”



So the question that's coming in your mind though is, okay but practically *how* are you going to keep us, God, what are the orders? What are the turns that we're supposed to take? Well he gives you three here, okay? In that little passage, Jude 20,

“But you, dear friends, [notice the first line] by building yourselves up in your most holy faith...”

So that's the first one. By building yourselves up in your most holy faith you will keep yourselves. Well, what does that mean? Well, to build yourself up in the faith is to basically invest yourself in learning more about it, is what that language means throughout the Scriptures. I have a friend on Instagram, and he's an odd Instagrammer, because he will take pictures of his tools, like he's a carpenter, and he will take pictures of his tools, and that's what he Instagrams. Other people will take pictures of their family; he's about the tools. And he'll video them, put them all on a table and he'll video all the tools. [Laughter] And he's got all sorts of different tools there, right? He's got the hammers and the electric hammers and...I don't know anything about tools so, there's a jigsaw there, I don't know, it's all puzzling to me. [Laughter] Some of you will get that later. [Laughter] So I talked to him once about his Instagram posts, I said, “So why are you always putting tools on the thing?” And he said, “Because the brand is amazing.” And I honestly don't know the brand, I think it's DeWalt, but I might be wrong. I have no idea what the brand is. But he's like, “No, this particular brand is amazing, it's the best brand there is, I only buy this particular brand.” And I'm like, “Why? Who cares what brand it is? If I need a power tool, I just go to Wal Mart.”

“<Gasps> What?” And he starts shaking. “How can you do that? What is wrong with you?” And I'm like, “You should see my house.” [Laughter] So I've thought about this interaction. I've had this interaction with other people about different things, but why is he so passionate about the tools and that particular brand? And I'm not. His passion, his dogmatism, his commitment to that brand is a function, the result of, his knowledge about it. My lack of commitment is a function, the result, of my ignorance about it. That's the way it works. The more you know about a particular thing, the more you are committed to your opinion about that particular thing, right? Well that's the way it works with the faith. If you want to be grounded and committed to the faith, once delivered to all the saints, then you should learn as much as you possibly can about it. Because when you take that diamond and you twist it and you see the beauty of the gospel and the God who is seen in it, man, your heart will sing about that. You want a path to spiritual renewal? Study God. He's the greatest subject in the universe. Look at him. Understand him. See how he's revealed himself in the Scriptures.

You know, the church for years and years, in order to keep the young people in the faith, they did a thing called catechesis. Catechesis was when you took somebody kind of from 12 to 18 years old, and so they were sort of reaching a point where they could understand things, or maybe adulthood at some level, and you said to them, “Listen, you've grown up in the church, and now at this point, I don't want you to just have your parents' faith, what I want you to do is I want you to understand the contours about the Christian faith.” And so they taught catechesis classes. We stopped doing this, and people wonder why so many young adults fall away from the faith. It's probably because they're not committed to it, and don't know enough about it. All they know is the feeling they had in their heart, and feelings come and go. But they don't know the God who is revealed in it.



I got a phone call, seriously, a few weeks ago, where another pastor asked me, “Listen, Jeff, what is the best discipleship tool that you have used in your church? Meaning, the one that has actually borne the most fruit in the lives of those you’ve used to disciple.” And I immediately thought, the theology class I teach on Thursday mornings. So 6:00 am, theology class, two year term, we go through a huge theology textbook, but we take the textbook and we read what he says, but then we compare it to Scripture and so we learn how to read the Scriptures while we’re learning the theology the Scriptures teach. I get letters at the end of this from people who say, “I cannot tell you how different my life is today from what it was two years ago when I started this. I had no idea that I used to be flipping back and forth with every wind of doctrine, but today I feel like I’ve got a bedrock on which I stand.” Right, that’s catechesis. It’s what happens. You’re going to continue in the faith, you’re going to keep yourselves in the love of God by building yourselves up in the most holy faith.

Second, did you see there, also by praying in the Holy Spirit. I’ve been on several mission trips, and there’s a weird thing that happens at the end of a mission trip. When you spend two weeks away in these kinds of organized suffering adventures with these people, and you develop really close relationships with them, no matter who they are, and at the end, you know, you come off the plane, and you’re coming through customs and immigration, and you come to the end and you have to say goodbye to these people, and you look each other in the eye and you realize, we’ve shared a lot together. I mean, I know you really well at this point. And so they give you a big hug, I’ve had young men crying, “I’m going to miss you so much.” And I’m like, “Nah.” [Laughter] And then they go. Really tight relationship, and then they go, and one of the challenges of being in a larger church is sometimes you don’t see them for a long time, or they go off to college or go do something else for a while. And then you see them again, like 18 months down the track, “Hey, how’s it going?” And I always feel awkward, like, okay, what is the appropriate greeting here? Are we going to man hug this? Like, what are we doing? Am I hugging you or am I shaking hands? Waving? I’ve had some guys be like, look at me and they’re like, “Uh…” They don’t even say anything. Why the difference? Why do you go from this close, hugging, sobbing, “I love you man,” to coldness? And the answer is, because in the gap there was no communication. Right? Because communication is fundamental to a healthy relationship. Right men? [Laughter] Some guys are like, “I’ve heard that before, somewhere…” Yes you have. [Laughter] Communication is fundamental to a healthy relationship. If you don’t ever talk to God, what do you think your relationship with God is going to sound like? Or be like? Seriously? Do you think you’re going to have a closeness with him? The strength of most relationships depends on the communication between the parties. You won’t remain close to him, and you won’t be inclined to him, if you don’t communicate with him.

I’ve got to tell you, I’ve got to give you a practical piece of advice that a friend gave me just a few months ago. I don’t pray that well. I’ve struggled with prayer my whole life. I find that there are days that I just go, and I just go for it in my life. And at the end of the day I’m like, “Lord, I’m so sorry I haven’t really been in conversation with you today.” And I don’t really have a ton of time in the earlier part of my day to sit down and have like 45 minutes. I would love that, but I don’t have the time. So my friend, I talked to him about this at one point, he’s a really great prayer, and he said, “Jeff, I’ve got to tell you, the thing that really changed my prayer life was this. You know how you have meetings during



the day? So you have a meeting, or you might go and have a phone call, or you might, you know, be involved with your spouse for a period of time, and then there's a gap after all of those things. So you have meetings or you spend time with people, and then there's a gap, there's a silent gap after all of those meetings. It might be you driving in the car, it might be you walking down the hall, there's a quiet gap. Sometimes it's one minute, sometimes it's an hour." He said, "Do you know what I do at the beginning of all those gaps? I pray for what just happened. There's silence, and I immediately say, 'Lord, I just had a meeting with Joe, you were there, man it sounds like this is going on, I know that this is happening in his family, I don't know what to do in that relationship, I don't know what to do in that work situation, would you help me?'" He said, "Honestly, I find myself talking all day through with God. Man, this has been a real help to me. Maybe it will be a help to you." Building yourselves up in the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, if you're going to reach safe harbour.

And third, by waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. By waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus, that's a reference to the judgement day. Jude is basically saying, "You're not there yet, guys. So if you understand that you're not there yet, you won't stop running." It's the way it works in a race, isn't it? You don't give up before you're done. You don't just sit down and have a picnic, thinking, oh this is wonderful. No. you keep going until the finish line.

I've got to show you this video that I love, it's relatively self explanatory, it's from soccer, this is a penalty kick in soccer in Africa. Roll the tape. [Laughter] So, there are thousands of these videos on YouTube, I'm addicted to them, right? You know, there's this one where there's a race where a guy from the University of Oregon, which I hate, University of Oregon is finishing this race, and he's way ahead, and he starts to celebrate before he's done, you know like pounding his chest, "Yeah, check me out!" And the guy from the University of Washington, where I went to school, he's behind him and he's just giving her, and he passes the dude in the last metre. With the guy not even knowing it. And when you're watching it you're like, "Yeah right Oregon, pompous." Right, you don't quit before it's done. You don't quit. If you know that the mercy of the Lord Jesus is still yet to come at that judgement day, then you don't quit until you reach the final. So many Christians who are like, "Yeah I believed in Jesus, I did all this stuff, and so I'm not going to go to church anymore or get really involved anymore because I'm good." No you're not! There's reefs everywhere! How are you going to make it through there without brothers and sisters in Christ? How are you going to make it through there?

When I show that video to people, and you know, I show it on my phone, I'll say to them when the ball hits the crossbar and comes flying back in the air, I'll say, "Okay, wait for it." When you say that to somebody, okay, here's what they *don't* usually do. When I say, "Wait for it, they don't usually go, "Okay," and turn around and get something to eat and come back. When you say, "Wait for it," they lean in. There's something coming. Right, this is Jude saying, "Wait for it." Then lean in, give more attention to it. Recognize that you're in dangerous waters and you will reach the desired haven if you give the right attention. Jude 20-23,



“But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”

So that’s his focus on us.

[How Do We Contend for the Faith of Others?]

He turns his attention now and he’s going to focus on what do you do for your friends though? Like, you’re in danger and you’re in these waters and you need to reach safe harbor so you pay attention to those things, but what about those who you love? What do you do about them? So what you find in Jude 22-23 are these words,

“Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”

Now, here’s what’s interesting about this. He works with a three-stage progression here. He’s saying okay, so there’s different kinds of people in different kinds of stages when it comes to your friends and loved ones and their draw to false teaching. There’s the first stage, which is some folks who are just starting to be enticed by it. They are following closely after you, maybe to use our image, they’re boating, so they’re behind you, and they’re following you closely through the minefield, through the reefs, but they start seeing others outside of your path, and thinking, oh that’s kind of interesting, they look like they’re having more fun. And they start to kind of give attention there. They start to waver. There’s another group, he says, who are already over in the dangerous waters. And there’s something you should do toward them. And then there’s those who are shipwrecked. They’ve already committed themselves. So how do you deal with each of those? To the wavering, to the somewhat committed, and to the false teacher themselves? And so here you get the first one: be merciful to those who doubt. To the wavering one, the one who’s between two opinions. In fact, that word “doubt” means waver in Greek. So you’re at the ice cream store, and you’re like, “Mmm, chocolate. Ohh, but look at that strawberry banana. Oh, I love strawberry banana. But it doesn’t have chocolate in it. And chocolate is *chocolate*. Oh, but strawberry banana-” And you’re friends are with you going, “Oh, please choose an ice cream.”

“But I can’t choose, I’m just between two.” Right, you’re wavering. You’re not really committed to either necessarily. You might have been in the store saying, “I want strawberry and banana,” but then the chocolate sort of draws you a little bit. Right. It’s what it means to doubt. What are we supposed to do with somebody who’s starting to veer? Do you scream at them? “Stop it you dummy! Pick the strawberry banana!” No, what you get here is, show mercy. Be merciful to them.

That showing mercy is a lot easier if you can see yourself in their doubting, right? Do you understand what I mean by that? Showing mercy is easier if you see yourself in the one to whom you’re showing the mercy. Like, if you understand where they’re coming from because you yourself have kind of been there before. In my neighbourhood, there’s a stop sign kind of near my house. And the other day I was driving my son home from baseball practice, and we were behind this car with an L on the back of it,



and she was stopped at a stop sign. And we came up behind and I left some distance, because I've been here before, right? And this girl gets out of the car at the stop sign, she gets out of the car, leaves the door wide open and starts walking across the street, just <crying> hands up in the air. The problem of course is, as many new drivers don't do, she didn't put the car in park, so the car is rolling toward me slowly. I put the window down, "It's rolling! It's rolling! It's rolling!" And she looks at me and goes, <crying> "No!"

"No, the car is rolling!" Her father is losing his mind in the passenger seat, "Get back in here right now!" So she runs back and gets in the car, puts on the brake, puts it in park, and then gets out and starts storming out with her hands on her hips, her dad gets out, "Get back here!" She finally gets in the passenger side, he gets in the driver side and drives off. Now, I wasn't actually very upset. And the reason is because I did it, right? When I was learning how to drive, I did that exact thing. My dad was driving me nuts, and I was like, "I'm out of here." It's easier to show mercy and grace to those if you're like, "Oh man, I've been in that situation before."

You should see the emails I get from people over theology. You should get... "How could you possibly think this particular thing? How dare -doesn't it do this and that all these things?" I get in discussions with them, even face to face from time to time, they're livid, and I kind of quietly smile. Not because I'm happy about their being mad at me, but I'm like, oh wow, you're just like me. I was sitting in classrooms at seminary, and I said this line to a professor in front of 400 people. I said to him, "I don't know what you're trying to teach us, but I believe the Bible." [Laughter] What? I've gotten an email with that line in it. "Dear Jeff, I don't know what you're trying to teach us, but I believe the Bible." Okay, so you show mercy. So let's be as honest as we can here. Which one among us has never doubted? I mean, the church is seen as a place where you're not allowed to have doubts. Why? We're all basically doubters. Don't we all, when we hear the line from the Scriptures, "I believe, help my unbelief," don't we all kind of instinctively go, yeah, that's me. I've got a lot of questions about this, God. I've got a lot of questions about it. Wouldn't it be great if our church was the kind of place where you could investigate that without someone coming over and going, "You need to stop questioning." Come on. No, have mercy on those who doubt.

Second one though is, save others by snatching them from the fire. So this is a little bit more committed, right? They're the ones who have left the safe path and are through the waters and they're in danger, and you're like, "No! Be careful!" The image there is actually a good one, you know if you've ever sat at a campfire and you get the marshmallow at the end of your little stick there, and you're holding it over, and you're telling your friend, "I'm an amazing s'mores maker. Like, I never burn the marshmallow." And your friend says, "Except for now." And you look over and it's smoking, you're like, "Aaahh!" You pull it out, that's the image. The proactive, aggressive, "Grab it!" Pull it out. Those already engaged and listening to false teaching, we're urged to save them. To snatch them from the fire, and that requires a kind of deliberate, proactive move on our part. It might bring harm to us. Fire burns. You put yourself at risk in order to save the valuable thing. So instead of saying it's a marshmallow, let's imagine you're at a campground in the United States, and you're down there for a few days and you're there at the campfire and for whatever reason you've got your passport, your Canadian passport with you, and it drops into the fire. And you see the passport there and your mind is racing about all the things that this is going to mean. This is going to burn up, I'm not going to get



back into Canada, oh my goodness I'm going to have to pay for my healthcare, and I'm done. Right? It's going to be horrible, oh my goodness! So what do you do? You grab it and you pull it out. You don't take time and consider the moment here. You snatch. James 5:19-20,

“My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”

If we act in a deliberate way to preserve an important document from the fire, how should we act to save people who are wandering (to use the language that James is using)? We wander, because we're prone to wander. Your friends, you, we're prone to wander. My little boy, when we were in New Zealand, he was prone to wander in the department store. We'd be shopping for something, we'd look over and he had wandered off. What do you do in that moment? Some of you parents, you've had this moment. What do you do? Do you go quietly over to the attendant? “Excuse me sir, is it possible for you to announce in the next 10, 20 minutes that my child is missing? He looks like this, I'll wait over here quietly until you have a chance.” No, you freak out! “My son is gone!” You grab people you don't know, “Did you see my son? Did you take my son?” You know, your clothes are going everywhere. Proactive, embarrassing even. You put yourself at risk for the sake of the important thing that you're trying to save. You do that? Or are you just too worried about what people might think of you? Maybe the fact that we're so worried about what people might think of us when we're trying to snatch our friends from the fire shows what we really value, and how valuable they are to us. They're valuable man. Proactivity is the answer.

So, be merciful to those who doubt. Save others by snatching them from the fire, and third, to others show mercy mixed with fear. Isn't that interesting? So mercy, it's the thing you're supposed to show to those who doubt or waver, but this one's a little different. So he's dealing now with those who are shipwrecked themselves, probably the false teachers. And he's saying, “Okay, I want you to show mercy to them, be careful. You need to hate even the clothing that is stained by the flesh. Show particular care, they have caught the disease, so you need to be aware that when you go into engaging with them, there is a chance that you too might catch it. So hazmat up. Be prepared with all of it.” You too may fall, is his argument there. In fact the language there is really helpful, the language of garment, did you see the line at the end, hating even the clothing, the word is garment, hating even the garment stained by corrupted flesh? That word for garment is a special word that refers to the clothing that is worn next to your skin. So in our day, that's your underwear. And stained underwear should conjure up an image to you. Well, that's what he's saying here. He's trying to give you an image of what do you do with the poo pants? [Laughter]

So my son comes home the other day, isn't the Bible great? My son comes home the other day and he was playing baseball, and he said, we were driving home, he said to me, “Yeah Dad, I, uh, I stepped in some dog doo and I wiped it off with my pants.” I was like, “How do you do that?” Right? But I just left the pants in the car. It was hot, it was like a hot day. So what do you do as a parent? You go out there and do you grab those pants and hug them tight? Mmm, those are good. I'm going to go wash those now, sling them over my shoulder. No way man, I'm out there and I pinched a little corner,



lift them up and keep a distance, if I had a stick I would have done that and dragged them inside and put them in the wash. That's what you do, you keep your distance. There's a requisite fear that you have when you're engaging with the garment stained by the flesh. That's what he's trying to say here, is if you're going to engage a false teacher, you need to understand that there's a reason others have followed them, and you're not any different from them. So be prepared for it. Be merciful to those who doubt, save others by snatching them from the fire, to others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Look, let me just finish with this. A number of weeks ago, I shared an image, a story about what I used to do when I was a camp counsellor, it was this Bible study that we used to run, I used to blindfold one of the kids in our cabin and I would say, "Okay, you're going to be led through an obstacle course, but no one's going to touch you, they're going to guide you by their voice through the obstacle course." And the kids would do it, they would start and they would go through the obstacle course following the voice, but the second time through I'd say, "Okay, so this time when you go through the obstacle course, all of the other kids in the cabin are going to start yelling at you and trying to get you to follow their voice instead. So you walk through the obstacle course." And I'd throw these kids in there, and they'd be screaming right in the kid's ear, "No! Follow me! Follow me! Follow me!" Some of them would try to copy the voice of the person he was supposed to be listening to. Very rarely did they end up getting safely to the destination like they did at first when nobody was talking. But when they did, I would always ask the same question, "How did you do it?" And they'd answer in the same way every time, "I had to listen carefully." Right. There is a safe harbour, the captain of your boat is going to get you there, if you listen carefully. Jude finishes the entire passage with a great promise, Jude 24-25,

"To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! [And all of God's people say] Amen."

Let me pray for us,

Lord, I'm thankful for your grace and for this book, for this text, Lord. This is a graver danger than we consider often, and I'm thankful for the time that we've been able to have to think about it. I pray, Father, that you would use both these sermons and what's in this book, Father, to help us to reach that safe harbour. And we're so thankful that our Lord Jesus guarantees that passage. So as we rely on him, give us the energy, Father, to work out our salvation. We love you and we thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.