

Trusting the Trinity
Jude 17-25
August 30, 2009
FBC Waynesboro

We return today to these verses in Jude. We drew near to them last week and danced around them but did not dig into them. We will dig into them today. Let's remember why these verses are so important to what we are doing in these days: We have begun a journey together to try to understand biblically and apply practically the teaching in the Bible about the Holy Spirit. But we could easily go astray from the start if we did not begin our journey by locating the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the context of the central doctrine of the Trinity. So that is where we have begun our journey: looking at the Holy Spirit in the context of the Trinity. Our God is one God in three persons. The three persons are equal in essence but distinct in expression. And as Wayne Grudem writes and we shall see later today the distinctions in the Trinity are seen in how the members of the Trinity relate to each other and to the world.

I was drawn to this text in Jude to help us understand the role of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the Trinity for three reasons. First, this teaching at the end of the little Book of Jude is the focal point for fighting the heresy that he was facing around A.D. 63. Less than one generation after the death and resurrection of Jesus the church was having to contend for clear doctrine. And the center of concern then and since then was a failure to understand correctly the doctrine of the Trinity. We saw last week that some in the church had equated the Holy Spirit with emotional outpourings and saw Jesus as the savior of the soul but not necessarily the Lord of Life. Such perversion of these precious principles made impossible a proper understanding of God.

So Jude comes to the end of this little letter and writes in verses 17-18. He tells us what is taking place, why it is taking place, and from whom it comes. What is taking place is the corruption of the core truths of the Word of God so that the truth of God is exchanged for a lie. It is taking place because God said it would as Satan is always active in the church raising up those who profess to be saints but are in fact sinister servants of Satan, and do not know that they are. And Jude says that this kind of thing comes from people who want the truth to be what they want it to be because of their worldly orientation and the absence in

their lives of the Spirit of God. Put simply, these are people who are actively involved in seeking to give shape to what the church believes and what the church is to be but they are more oriented to the world than to the Word of God and the Spirit of God is not in them.

So that we can understand exactly what kind of people these are, let's go to the text from which Jude is quoting and do not miss that in A.D. 63 Jude is quoting Paul as an absolute apostolic authority. Jude is referencing here 2 Timothy 3 where Paul says that in the last days there will be three primary characteristics that will be present in large numbers of people, many of whom profess to be Christians: they will be lovers of self, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure. And what they will want is an understanding of a relationship with God that will allow them to live out of this kind of orientation to life while believing that they belong to God. Remember that the heresy that Jude was addressing related to a failure to understand the role of the Holy Spirit and the rule of Jesus in our lives. If you were to ask me to name the highest form of heresy in our day, it would be very easy for me. It is everywhere in the church: It is our creation of a Jesus who saves the soul but does not transform the life and so long as we do the things that the church says we need to do to be saved, we are saved no matter what anybody says, even God. And this heresy is driven on the winds of individualism and pluralism so that we have people who say that my relationship with God is between me and God and I determine whether it is a right relationship or not. So, heresy is in the church; it always has been and always will be until Jesus comes to take His church home to make her perfectly holy. So, what do we do about it?

Jude tells us to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints and then he tells us how to do that. Verses 20-23 give us seven things that we are to do in the face of heresy grouped into two categories. There are four things in the first category and three things in the second category. The two categories blend into one so that the first expresses itself in the second and the second emerges inevitably out of the first, and the absence of this reality in our lives or the life of the church is a sign of some at least emerging if not full blown heresy! So, let me give you the two categories and then let's look at the details here: Jude says that we are to give ourselves to growing in the grace of God or to the work of sanctification. Those who are brought into a relationship with God by the grace of God are given the gift of the Holy Spirit who brings to us an immediate and growing desire to give ourselves to the worship of God and to the learning and

living of the Word of God. And this is not related to age. A child who is truly saved by God's grace is given the promise of the Holy Spirit who comes into our hearts to inspire us to worship and to learn God's Word. A Senior Adult who is saved with only a few years left is given this same desire. This is not connected to your age or your circumstances in life. And this growing in the grace of God gives birth to a lifestyle of giving the grace of God by way of the sharing of the Gospel with others. AND IT IS HERESY TO THINK THAT A PERSON COULD BE SAVED AND NOT EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESS THESE REALITIES OR WORSE TO THINK THAT A PERSON COULD BE SAVED AND NOT BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN BOTH REALITIES.

Jude says that we are to give ourselves to growing in the grace of God and he gives us here four definitive directives. First, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. "Build Yourselves" is a passive participle. It refers to ongoing activity in which you are engaged in that which is being done by somebody else. Paul makes what is here very plain: work out your own salvation with fear and trembling because it is God who is working in you both to work and to will that which brings pleasure to Him. Or look at 2 Peter 1:10-11. So, it all begins with our giving ourselves to the Word of God which God has given us as a means to grace to enable our growth. Second, we are to pray in the Spirit. This is not a particular form of praying; it is an acknowledgement that we really do not know how to pray and we really do not know what we need so praying in the Spirit is to pray trusting the Spirit to intercede for us with those groaning which cannot be uttered. We will do a whole sermon on this later. Third, keep yourselves in the love of God. The word for keep means to focus and maintain and the love of God refers to the experience of the love of God and the expression of love for God. And the word for love is that foundational word that means clearly absolute and total commitment. God loved the world and committed Himself to a plan of salvation that would provide salvation for the world and when we say that we love God we are saying that we are totally committed to Him and His Word and His way through His Son. Fourthly, and I am so glad this one is here: welcome God's mercy as it comes to you to minister to you. We all make many mistakes. We fail along the way and fall on our faces and as it is the grace of God that saves us it is the many mercies of God that awaken us to each new day and give us a fresh start. One of my favorite books in the Bible is Lamentations where I can read, "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning, great is your faithfulness"(Lamen. 3:22-23).

Jude then moves from our giving ourselves to growth in grace to our giving grace to others. One follows the other as night follows day, as the emerging of the moon gives way to the rising of the sun. One without the other is less than whole and less than holy and whatever is less than holy can be heresy. So, we grow in grace so as to give grace to others. This means first that we give mercy to those who doubt. Don't debate with them and do not diminish them. Give the precious oil of loving care and concern as God works in their hearts. Doubts are often the avenue that delivers us into deeper faith. Doubts are often unanswered questions that have an impact on the way we think and act. Be patient with the doubters. Show them mercy. Secondly, be so clear and consistent and continual in the communication of the Gospel that you save some who are already slipping into hell. This is your business as a believer. Always be bearing witness to Jesus. And thirdly show mercy with fear and here the word is a call for us not to compromise the Gospel in our care for people. We can sometimes do that can't we? We can see someone living consistently a pattern of life that is not pleasing to God and because we remember some moment when they said that they were saved we trust that moment rather than the truth of God that where there is faith there is always fruit and where there is no fruit there is no faith. We are to be merciful but we are to fear God lest we give to anybody false assurance. Don't say to somebody living to gratify the desires of the flesh that so long as they once declared their love for Jesus that they are saved. They aren't? And if we let them think that they are we not only do not love them, we will be held responsible before God for them.

In the face of heresy we are to grow in the grace of God and we are to give the grace of God to others. Well, how in the world are we going to do that? Jude makes it plain: We do it by way of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us and works through us to bring glory to God by fulfilling faithfully the purpose of God in and through our lives. Verses 24-25 are a prayer. The language is liturgical or poetic. We must hear it as one piece and then plunge into it to pick it apart to hear here what is proclaimed.

This text shows us the POWER of the Holy Spirit. He is power. He is the personal power of God in our lives. The word for "able" is a unique Greek word that means ability because of power. It is the word from which we get "dynamite." If I give you a stick of dynamite, you are holding ability in your hand; if I light it you are holding power. That is the Holy Spirit. He has the ability to do

in your life all that God has designed for Him to do but that ability turns to power when your life is transformed by the grace of God through the surrender of your life to Jesus Christ. This text shows us the PECULIARITY of the Holy Spirit. “To Him” is written in such a way in the Greek text that there are no options. It is not the Holy Spirit as one option. He is the only one who can enable you and empower you to be the person and to achieve the purpose that God has for you. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit brings all the PROVISION AND PROTECTION OF GOD to you. The word for “keep” is the Greek word for a fortress. The Holy Spirit enters your life at the moment of conversion and becomes by His presence and power your primary resource to fight the enemy as He comes to you through your flesh and through the ways of the world. And He will guard you and guide you. Now we will learn in our study that you can grieve the Holy Spirit and you can quench the Holy Spirit but if you are a believer and do these things, you can’t breathe until you repent before God. We are going to talk about the huge difference between a moral consciousness and the mastery of the Holy Spirit in and over your life. Satan wants you to think that the presence of the former is a sure sign that you belong to God; it could be nothing more than the outcome of being raised in a good home in the South! Fourth, the Holy Spirit PREVENTS us from falling. We cannot fall away from God forever. We cannot lose that which God is doing. A believer is controlled and compelled by the Holy Spirit to such an extent that we cannot stand ourselves when we are living in ways that do not please God. Fifth, the Holy Spirit PRESENTS us to God and sixth notice that when He presents us to God He does so as one who is PURE AND PERFECT. And seventhly notice that the presentation is not about us at all; it is for the PRAISE AND PLEASURE of our God.

That is how the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer. But the work of the Holy Spirit see here is done in concert with the Father and the Son. So the Holy Spirit works in us to sanctify us under the Lordship of Jesus for the glory of the God who is saving us so that one day the Holy Spirit can present us before God---Father, Son, and Holy Spirit---for the glory, majesty, power and authority of His great Name before all time, now and forever, amen.