

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
April 10, 2011

Grace to Stand

Jude 17-25

Key verses: “Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24-25)

“Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate. Costly grace...is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship*).

Cheap grace, as Bonhoeffer calls it, has always been a problem for the Church. The Book of Jude was written to combat a particular kind of false teaching which said, essentially, that being saved by grace gave people *license to sin*, since their sins would no longer be held against them.

Jude said of these false teachers, “They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign” (v. 4). The overall purpose of Jude is to urge believers, in the face of such false teaching, to “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (v. 3).

In Jude 20-21, believers are given four practical ways to stand strong in the face of false teaching and error:

1. *“build yourselves up on your most holy faith”* – By contrast to the false teachers and their erroneous view of grace, Jude teaches that we must take an active part in advancing our spiritual welfare. It is God who, by His grace, builds us up and enables us to stand. But we must avail ourselves of the “means of grace”—worship, prayer, Bible study, service, for example—in order to stand strong in our faith.

2. *“pray in the Holy Spirit”* – Every Christian has the Holy Spirit within him or her. When we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, the Spirit will do great things in and through us, especially in our prayer lives.

“One day our church copier broke down,” writes John McGarvey. “I’m not mechanically minded, but I called the repair shop to see if they could tell me what

the problem was and if I could do anything about it. I quickly discovered, however, that I didn't even know how to describe what was broken. I didn't know the names of the parts or what was specifically wrong. I just knew the copy machine didn't work.

“So the repair shop sent out a technician. While working on our machine, he also called the shop. Unlike me, he knew how to describe what was needed. He used words I didn't understand, but the person at the shop did, and soon the copier was repaired. My need was met because someone came and communicated to headquarters in words I could not express. The apostle Paul teaches (in Romans 8) that this is also what the Holy Spirit does for us. When we don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit knows precisely what we need and prays in a language the Father perfectly understands” (from *Leadership*, vol. 16, no. 2).

3. *“keep yourselves in the love of God”* – Again, Jude contrasts cheap grace to authentic grace which involves our active obedience and submission to God's gracious working in us. In this case, Jude challenges believers to “keep yourselves in the love of God.” God goes to great lengths to keep us in his love (see, for example, Romans 8:35-39). But God's grace also enables us to keep ourselves in his love.

4. *“look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life”* – One of the ways that we can stand strong in our faith is to keep an eternal perspective. Knowing that eternal life lies ahead gives us courage to live godly and holy lives in the present.

Verses 21-23 give a call for Christians to help rescue others who are spiritually lost or who have fallen away from the faith. While we are to do what we can to reach the lost for Christ and reclaim those who have left the faith, we must be careful that we not let them pull us down with them (v. 23).

Jude ends with a wonderful promise. The Book of Jude has focused on the ungodly and their false teachings and practices. It has reminded believers that authentic grace involves our active obedience and submission to God. Jude ends with the encouraging promise that our God is fully able to keep all who keep their trust in Him:

“Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Thanks be to God!

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