Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Survival Strategy for Apostate Times, Part 3
Scripture: Jude 22-23
Code: 65-14

Open your Bible, if you will, to the last little section of the epistle of Jude, the half-brother of our Lord who only wrote this one book, but what a formidable one it is. The epistle written by Jude, this is an epistle addressed at the issue of false teachers, not false teachers outside the church but false teachers inside the church. Apostates not outside the church but imbedded inside the church. It is a book of warning.

And I think perhaps we live in the day we live now, we get maybe the best possible insight into this book. And this is the standpoint from which I say that. We're all very highly sensitized to the dangers of terrorists. Certainly in my life time and any of our life times we've never really understood what terrorists are as we understand it now. Maybe at no time in the history of the world did people understand terrorists the way we understand them now. The word has always been around, or some form of the word in just about every language, but never has there been a time in human history when terrorists yielded the level of power that they wield today because of the development of science, because of the weapons of mass destruction, because of explosives, because of airplanes, because of bombs, because of weaponry. Terrorism takes on a whole new meaning and we are in the history of the world the most sensitized the deadly threat of terrorism. It has changed our world. It has changed our world more dramatically in the sense of creating fear than anything that I've ever known in my lifetime. It is far more frightening that the threat of any natural disaster. It is far more threatening than the implications of atomic warfare because we've seen this unleashed.

The thing that makes terrorists so frightening to us is they're in our country...they're in our neighborhoods. They're on the airplanes with us, on the bus, in school, at the market. And they are plotting our death and they're plotting our destruction and certainly they are disrupting our lives because now we have all of this massive kind of security that we have to go through when we want to travel. Our nation is involved in an unbelievable effort to try to protect us from terrorism. All of life as we know it has been redefined by terrorists and their threat. We live every day under some kind of graded alert system, don't we. We're not sure what to do about it. I get up in the morning and do the same thing I do if it's green or yellow or orange or red. I just worry more but I really don't know what to do about it. I know there are an awful lot of people doing an awful lot to try and stop these terrorists at the point of attack, and that seems to be where we are focusing...stop the deadly attacks by terrorists at the very point of the potential attack. And when we discover that the City Group building in New York is the point of attack, we surround it. When we decide that some other financial center, Wall Street, is the point of attack, we lock down that place and create a kind of security environment which

cannot be breached or easily breached. And so far we've been successful by trying to stop them at the point of their attack.

And it seems to me that we're sort of stuck with doing this because we've decided that we are a country that celebrates freedom, a country that is defined by our openness. We just don't feel good about racial profiling, about restrictive immigration, about intense border controls. Really, I think, for political reasons more than anything else, our leaders don't want to stand up and make issues out of these things. And as long as we don't have a system in place to stop terrorists before they arrive, or to throw them out once they've come, we're left to try to stop the attack at the last point. This is a very cumbersome approach and this is a very difficult approach. As long as it's not difficult for them to get here to embed in the country, we are faced with a very, very difficult challenge. And as we've heard our politicians say many times, we only have to be wrong once.

Now I'm not trying to get political here. But I see in this an analogy in the church. I see everything in an analogy related to the church and certainly this. The church is very much like our nation, it likes its openness, it likes its tolerance, it likes its freedom, it likes its acceptance. And it does not have the will and it does not have the inclination to stop spiritual terrorists where they have to be stopped at its borders. We don't want to do spiritual profiling. We don't want to really identify those who terrorize the church. Racial profiling as a nation, we think is politically incorrect and spiritual profiling is viewed in the church as spiritually incorrect. Who are we, we think, to sit in judgment on anybody? And so we don't stop terrorists at the border. They're in our churches, we're talking now about spiritual terrorists, they're in our seminaries. In fact, in many cases they've taken over churches, denominations and seminaries all together. They are in our Christian colleges so that many of our Christian colleges could not longer be defined as Christian. Their books are in our Christian bookstores and in our Christian libraries. And these spiritual terrorists are planning the destruction of the church and really we're not doing anything to restrain them or expose them. They operate freely in an undiscerning, gullible, tolerant church environment. And frankly, Jude is written to awaken us to the reality of their presence.

Back to verse 3, "I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation." He had one subject in mind, that was our common salvation, but he felt the necessity, he says, "To write to you appealing that you get involved in the war on spiritual terrorism, that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints because...verse 4 says...certain persons have crept in unnoticed." Certain persons have crept in unnoticed, we have inside the church terrorists embedded everywhere. Verse 12 says, "They are like hidden reefs in your love feasts." They're below the surface, they're clandestine. The Holy Spirit then through Jude is calling us to get involved in the war on spiritual terror and in order to help us, Jude is a profiler, he is a profiler of these spiritual terrorists. In this brief little letter which is very parallel to Peter's second epistle, particularly chapter 2 as well as part of chapter 3, but in this very brief profile paralleling 2 Peter 2 and repeated very, very similarly to 2 Peter 2, repeated because it's so important, Jude profiles spiritual terrorists because he

understands that they are in the church and they're going to blow up the church with their spiritual bombs. And he tells us through this epistle that they can be recognized by licentiousness, that is immorality. That they are lawless. That they are insubordinate. That they are defiled, rebellious, mercenary, greedy, like Luke says in the middle of his recording of Jesus' words, "The Pharisees loved money." They were the spiritual terrorists in Judaism in the time of Jesus, as we're learning. But these terrorists are lustful, licentiousness, lawless, insubordinate, defiled, rebellious, mercenary, greedy, materialistic, self-centered, shameless, proud, sensual and void of the Holy Spirit. Their theology is bad. They deny the Lord in reality. They may feign to honor Him, but they deny Him in reality...look at their theology. And then look at their character, they have to be profiled. The church cannot be gullible. It cannot be witless. It cannot be accepting. It cannot be all-embracing without allowing the terrorists to come in and be destructive. We already live today in a time when spiritual terrorism has done its destructive work in our own country for years, for decades, even for centuries. This letter is a call to the reality that we're going to have to deal with spiritual terrorists. And there has been in every generation since this time an unwillingness on the part of many who call themselves Christians to profile these people and stop them at the borders of the church. And so they have infiltrated and in many cases they have taken over, and they have blown people right into hell, along with them, with their...with their spiritual destruction.

And so, all the way down through verse 16 there is this profiling of these spiritual terrorists. And then coming into verse 17 everything shifts, and that's where we are right now. How do we respond? How do we react? How do we survive? How do we win this war on spiritual terrorism?

You notice, and we've been mentioning this, if you just flow through the rest of the epistle, verse 4, "Certain persons," verse 8, "These men," verse 10, "These men," verse 11, "They," verse 12, "These men," verse 14, "These," verse 16, "These." And then one comment in verse 19, "These." And in contrast to that, "But you," and verse 20, "but you." And in those verses and most of that final section down to the benediction in 24 and 25, the direction that Jude takes is to talk to us about what we do to win the war, what we do to survive in this war on spiritual terrorism.

What should be our response? What should be our reaction?

First of all, I told you, Jude says you must remember in verse 17 and following, "Beloved, you ought to remember, remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ that they were saying to you in the last time there shall be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts, these who are separated thinking they're elevated, worldly minded or sensual and devoid of the Spirit."

The first thing we learn is you have to remember, remember that the Apostles said they would come. And he quotes from 2 Peter 3:3, Peter being an example of the Apostles who predicted their coming.

First thing is to realize this, this isn't God having lost control, this isn't the plan of God gone awry, this isn't a surprise, this is prophesied. Nothing is happening that wasn't predicted. You should expect it, you were warned about it and there it is. And the other side of that is not only should you not be surprised by it, but you should anticipate the reality of it and wake up. If you had been told by an absolutely reliable source to expect the terrorists to come, then you better be busy profiling them, discerning who they are, finding who they are and exposing them before they do their damage.

So the first thing is to remember that you were told they were coming. You don't have any excuse not to be vigilant. You don't have any excuse not to be aware. You don't have any excuse not to be alert. And it seems to me so basic and simple to say to the church today, "Wake up, you have been warned. You have been told to remember that it was prophesied." Even Jesus said false Christs and false prophets will proliferate. All through Scripture these warnings are given to us. Remember you were told to expect it. Expect false teachers to embed themselves in Christian institutions, Christian ministries, Christian schools, colleges, seminaries, Christian denominations, those that bear the name of Christ. That is exactly where Satan wants to send the terrorists to do their destruction. And they hide themselves by professing Christ and professing to be representatives of God and to know the truth. They hide themselves in robes and they hide themselves in priestly orders and they hide themselves behind theological degrees as biblical scholars and experts and they are terrorists.

So the first thing is to remember, you have been duly warned. It is already the last time, that started when Jesus came. They will come, you were told, and they will be driven by their own ungodly lusts. Expect them and be alert and be aware and unmask them for the protection of the church.

Secondly, not only to remember, but last time we talked about to remain...to remain. And in verses 20 and 21, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." Stay faithful to the truth. Don't waver. And there are basically four things here that are commanded of us. Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, that simply means being edified by the Word. Our most holy faith is that sound doctrine, that truth revealed in Scripture. Build yourself up on that, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is the way Peter puts it. Be edified. Be strengthened. Become mature. This calls us to the spiritual discipline of studying the Word that we may grow thereby. That again is what Peter said. Babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.

And secondly, praying...praying in the Holy Spirit. That is communing constantly with the Spirit of God, going before God in the power and the will of the Spirit to demonstrate your dependence on God and to cry out and to call out for His protection, His grace, His insight, His power. It's a life of these spiritual disciplines of study and prayer.

And then, keep yourselves in the love of God. Simply, as we saw last time, means be obedient. God's love showers blessing on those that are obedient and as you continue to obey, you enjoy the fullness of God's protection, God's grace, God's blessing.

And the last one, of course, is waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. We are characterized then in these disciplines: study of the Word, communion and prayer in the power and the will of the Holy Spirit, obedience to what God has commanded of us, living in hope in the expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ, that is, never getting too bogged down in what this world offers. This is not where it matters here.

In fact, Kerry Hardy(??) telling me today, telling us as elders about a phone call he received from a gentlemen down in Texas, I think it was, who called up to say that he had invested in some kind of business and it didn't work out and he was losing...he lost his car and he lost his house, is that right? And he was calling Kerry to ask him if as a Christian he killed himself would he still go to heaven? Now there's a man who doesn't understand that what happens to your house and your car doesn't matter because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses. It doesn't matter. And I...Kerry reminded me of something I said to the pastors in the seminar the other day. We received word that we would be taking off a network, a radio network, I think 28 or 30 radio stations, which is something you don't like to happen, but it had been decided by people that run that network that I was going to be removed from that network and somebody put in my place because I was...I got a letter that basically said, "You do not believe your own doctrinal statement. We have been informed by some evangelical people, some other evangelical leaders that you don't really believe what your doctrinal statement says."

Well that's a pretty serious accusation. That's about integrity. And when that...when that happened, my response was this...That's not true, but if the Lord wants us on there, fine. If He doesn't want us on there, that's fine, too. I'm not really caught up with how many stations we're on, or whether we're on here there or anywhere else. I feel bad for people who can't hear Grace To You. But I can't control that. My life doesn't even consist in the abundance of ministries God gives me. If He wants me to write a book, I'll write a book. If He doesn't want me to write a book, I don't care. If there is no Grace To You tomorrow, it doesn't exist in the world, that isn't where I define my life. I can't control those kinds of things. What matters to me is to look at what's coming in eternal glory. And the longer I live, the more wonderful it becomes to me.

You can't hold too strongly to the issues of this life. You have to understand that that which connects itself to God, that which is eternal matters. And that means truth matters more than anything else. And if you lose some stations because you tell the truth, that's the way it is. So how do we survive in a time of apostasy? By being built up in the Word, by communing in faithful prayer in the power of the Spirit, by obeying the Word and by living in the light of the future, living in hope. These things make us strong and we saw last time, according to 1 John 2:12 to 14, help us to overcome the evil one. You

show me a church of people that are growing in the Word, that are committed to Holy Spirit-directed prayer, that are living in obedience to God's commands, and that are living in the light of the glory of heaven, and I'll show you a tough place for terrorists to survive because that is a mature church and maturity produces discernment. Hebrews 5 says that. Maturity produces discernment. It's children who are tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, Ephesians 4. So remain faithful to the things you know to be true and you will develop the sense of discernment that will help you recognize the terrorists when they're there.

Now there's a third element here and that's what I want to talk about tonight. The third element, remember, remain and reach...and reach. The war is not only defensive, it is offensive because we have this very unique responsibility. Not only do we have to expose the terrorists and defend ourselves against the terrorists and stop them at the border before they can infiltrate the church and that, my dear friends, is why there is church discipline that keeps heretics and the blatant unrepentant sinners out of the communion of the saints because you have to stop them at the border, or they become leaven that leavens the lump. But not only do we have to stop the enemy, we have the additional responsibility of winning over the enemy which is a double challenge. Those who are the greatest threat to us are also our mission field. So the war is not only defensive, it is offensive, not only do we stop the enemy from destroying us, but we're called to divert the enemy. We have to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We have to make disciples of all nations, that's the great commission. But it even involves the people who are the greatest threat to the church. That's what Jesus was trying to do at lunch with the Pharisees. He was not just pronouncing curses on them, He was exposing their true condition to them so that they could be brought to a place where they could recognize the reality of their spiritual condition and turn from it. Since the world is so dominated by false teachers and false religions, and since apostates are in the church everywhere, we have a formidable responsibility for evangelism.

Now Jude helps us to understand that in two very brief verses, verses 22 and 23. I'm just going to talk about these and I'm not going to keep you a long time, it's pretty clear. There are...there are three kinds of people that threaten the church that we have to reach, okay? They're terrorists basically in the church, or terrorists in training, or potential terrorists, they fall into three categories. There are the confused, first of all...the confused. There are people in the church that are being confused by the false teachers that are there, that are being confused by the heresies and the error and the false doctrine that's being taught, or the licentious lifestyle that's being tolerated. There are the people who are the confused. Look at verse 22. "And have mercy on some who are doubting."

The first group of people that we have to be concerned about is the confused, the doubting. To have mercy means to show kindness and this is the kindness of giving them the truth because down in verse 23 it repeats it again in the middle of the verse, "On some have mercy with fear." This mercy is the merciful presentation of the truth. That is to say this, folks, look, when you come across someone who is now caught up with spiritual terrorists to the point that they are confused, you might have a

tendency to say, "Get them out of my life, get rid of them, get them away, I want nothing to do with them. They're starting to drift the wrong direction. We want to abandon them, we want to clear the decks of these people." On the one hand you want to protect the church. On the other hand you have to show mercy to those people and the mercy that they need is the...and mercy meaning something they don't really deserve and haven't earned...in spite of their threat to the church, you have the obligation to feel compassion, to feel sympathy, to feel concern for someone who is doubting. Now the word doubting is basically confused. False teachers always go after people who are weak. Paul says they want to lead silly women captive, 2 Timothy 3. They go after the weak, those that are vulnerable, those that are immature, the children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Those are not strong in doctrine, or strong in communion with the Spirit of God, or strong in obedience, those who are not living in the light of the glory to come. They find those weak ones, 1 Thessalonians 5 talks about how we need to support the weak, the weak are there and the seducers, the false teachers and the pretenders. It might be in a book, it might be on a radio, it might be on quote/unquote Christian television, it might be in some seminar. It might be through some personal contact. It might be in literature that comes to their home. It could be a lot of ways. It might be someone even in their church who begins to capture their weakness, capture their doubt and they become confused. These are not people who are anti-Christ. These are not people that are anti-gospel. These are just people who are confused, they're doubting. That is to say they're not sure what the truth is.

And there are many of these people in the church. There are some of you here tonight. You might even be a believer who is in the very time which we now speak, being led astray. You've come across some literature. You've come across some teaching, some cult, or some movement and you're beginning to question the gospel that you were once attracted to. And you probably might be saying something like, "Well, I'm open to the truth." Well if you're open to the truth, you're also open to...what?...error.

There are people in the church who are open. As I said, not anti-Christ, not anti-gospel. In fact, if you ask them, they say, "We're here because we're open." I have had people say that to me. "I'm not a Christian but I'm certainly open to it and that's why I'm here." In Luke 11 Jesus said, "Well you're either for Me or...what?...you're against Me." I think I have found pretty well in my life that anybody who's open to the truth is also open to error. You want to get that thing closed as quickly as you can. But false teachers and false doctrine and apostates and spiritual terrorists prey on the people who are not yet able to rise above their doubts.

In Acts 20 that is such a great chapter, that's a sampler of Pauline ecclesiology teaching on the church. But listen to Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock." He's telling the Ephesian elders, the pastors at the church of Ephesus this. "Be on guard for yourselves, all the flock." Why? Verse 29, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you." Here come the spiritual terrorists. As soon as Paul leaves, they'll come. And that will tell you how important

strong leadership is when the strong leader leaves, they move in not sparing the flock. They're going to try to destroy. "And from among your own selves men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them."

Here's what happens. False teachers come in from the outside. They infiltrate the church. They creep in unnoticed. They are hidden reefs in your love feasts. And they begin to effect some people. And they draw people to themselves and then those people begin to speak perverse things and draw disciples after them, as well. It happens in the church, it happened in Corinth. Judaizing false teachers came in after Paul left, attacked the Apostle Paul, had a false doctrine to teach, corrupted the great doctrine of the resurrection. Paul had to write, plead with those people not to abandon him as the Apostle of the gospel, and not to abandon the truth. They came to Galatia and other cities in the Galatian region, Galatia being a region not a city, and in Galatians chapter 1 the Apostle Paul addresses the issue. He writes back to them, "I'm amazed that you're so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel." I can't believe how fast you've defected. And how did it happen? False teachers came in and preyed upon the doubting, that is the weak. And he says in verse 8, "If an angel from heaven, or we preach another gospel, let him be accursed." I say it again in verse 9, "If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed." And over in chapter 3 he says, "How could you begin in the Spirit and now be perfected by the flesh?" How could you begin with the truth of the gospel and the power of the Spirit and now buy into legalism?

It's just the way it is. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11 Paul says, as we pointed out earlier, "I'm concerned that you have left the simplicity of devotion to Christ and like Eve you've been seduced away." Yes there are people in the church who are weak. They may be believers and they may be unbelievers who are just open. But they're really the first victims of false doctrine. This is the basic strategy of liars, to prey on the doubting, creating confusion. That's why all the way back to Psalm 1, Psalm 1 and I use this Psalm a lot in talking about The Master's College and why we believe so strongly in Christian education, as opposed to secular education. Listen to Psalm 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked." Pretty clear, isn't it. You don't want to be trained by the wicked. "Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers." You don't want to nestle down in an environment of wicked, sinful mockers, but you want to be blessed? "Put your delight in the law of the Lord, meditate in it day and night."

In 2 John, as we remember from our series in John, 2 John verse 8, "Watch yourselves that you might not lose what we've accomplished but that you receive a full reward." Anybody who goes too far doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ, doesn't have God. You've got to know that. If somebody comes with a deviant view of Christ, he doesn't have God. Verse 10, "If he comes to you and doesn't bring the true teaching, do not receive him into your house. Do not give him a greeting." Don't let him near you. They prey upon those that are open.

So we have a responsibility to get to these people who are the confused...back to the end of Jude. And have mercy on them, and that mercy means that we don't write them off because they haven't made a commitment, we don't write them off because they're weak. We don't write them off because they're vacillating. We understand that they have eternal souls and they need to hear the mercy of the gospel. You know, in America in our culture today, there are so many people like that, so many who would say, "Oh, I go to church, I drift into this church and that church kind of like the music. I go to the self-help group at this church over here. Or I, you know, I want my kids in church here. And I'm kind of open." These people are the first-line victims of false religion. And the mercy that they need is the truth. All the other religions, of course, are demonic.

So we reach the doubters, the confused and they are relatively speaking, the most accessible because they're open. You know anybody that's open, you need to get there as fast as you can and help them close their openness by embracing the truth. They are the most accessible and the most vulnerable.

The second group after the confused are the convinced. Now the work gets a little tougher. In verse 23, "Save others snatching them out of the fire." Now we come to a group that's already in the fire. T his is a bigger challenge. They have bought the lies. They have owned the lies. And the language here is very, very graphic. They are already being singed by hell. They're in it. Save others. Now we've gone beyond having mercy to a rescue operation.

Now we know we can't save anybody. I can't save anybody. In fact, verse 25, "To the only God our Savior." God does the saving. And Jude is not violating that. God is the, listen, God is the ultimate source of salvation. We are just the means, the secondary means. He is the primary cause of salvation, we are the secondary means. God does the saving. We partner with Him not as a primary cause but as a secondary means. We are the tools He uses.

Look at the end of James, not too far away, at the very end of James chapter 5 verse 19. This is really in the same context. "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth," somebody goes and strays into this thing and they're in the fire, "and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner," that's an unregenerate person, an unconverted person, that word sinner is always used to refer to someone who is not saved, "let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death." Now again James is not saying that we are the primary cause of that salvation, we are rather the secondary means that God uses. We're in the business of saving, as God uses us to do that. Somebody who strays from the truth, somebody who wanders away into error needs to be rescued.

Now, it says save others, snatching them out of the fire. The implication is that they're already in the fire of this false belief. They've been convinced. They're not just confused, they're not convinced.

They've bought the lie of liberal theology. They've bought the lie that Jesus isn't God. They've bought the lie that salvation is part by grace and part by works. They've bought the lie that whatever form of apostate Christianity they're seduced by and they're now in the fire, they're already being singed by the fires of hell which will engulf them in the future. And the imagery is very vivid. Snatch them out of the fire, *harpazo*, to take by force, to carry away, to attack. Now we're getting into language that is not gentle...not gentle. We're snatching them out of the fire.

Jude must have been a very devout student of the Old Testament because this imagery is surely borrowed from the Old Testament. Amos chapter 4, the prophet Amos, verse 11, "I overthrow you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and you were like a fire brand snatched from ablaze." God says that to Israel. You would have been consumed long ago, I snatched you out of the fire. And then He says at the end of verse 11, "Yet you haven't returned to Me even after I did that." So that imagery comes from the Old Testament, God snatching Israel out of the flames of annihilation and destruction. It also is in Zechariah, Zechariah chapter 3. So it was somewhat idiomatic and in Zechariah 3, Joshua the high priest is standing before the angel of the Lord, Satan standing at His right hand to accuse him, and the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan, indeed the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you, is this not a bran plucked from the fire?" In other words, there again is that same phrase, God having rescued His people, God having rescued this high priest from the fire. And so here is that same concept. We have to do sort of what God did and snatch people out of the fire.

When you meet somebody who is convinced about their false system, who has been convinced, you don't turn your back on them, you don't push them away, you don't shun them. You don't embrace them as a part of the true fellowship. You don't accept them. Remember they're spiritual terrorists, but you go after them in a very serious rescue operation. And that's what Jesus did with the Pharisees, very confrontive, very blunt, very severe warnings, promises of judgment, devastation and hell. You come with force. You don't toy with them. It's...it's part of rescuing people like 2 Corinthians 10:3 to 5 says, where we smash the fortresses and set the captives free. We have to come with great powerful weapons to smash the ideologies. Paul says the imaginations, that's in one translation, it's the...it's the *logismos*, the ideas. People are basically victims of the ideas, they're imprisoned by the ideas and Paul says we have to smash those false ideologies. The only way to do that is to bring the truth to bear upon them and smash down the fortresses of ideas, false and wrong ideas and set the people free.

So we have a ministry to the confused, a more gentle ministry in one sense in their confusion. We want to lead them carefully to the truth, warning them about error. And then we come to the convinced and we have a much more severe operation on our hands as we reach into the fire, already they're being singed by what's coming in hell and we have to snatch them before hell engulfs them. And we see the model of the Lord doing this. There were those people in the society in which He ministered who were confused. They were unsure. They were just the sort of normal sinful people floating around wondering what was right and wrong and Jesus led them often patiently and gently to

the knowledge of the truth. But when He confronted the convinced Pharisees and scribes, He attacked them with a much different approach, understanding the seriousness of their condition.

There's a third group, let's just call them the committed...the committed. Verse 23, again, "And on some," group three, "on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." Among the convinced is this other group, some of these you've got to deal with with fear. When we go after the terrorists not only to protect ourselves from them, to profile them, to stop them at the borders, but we understand that we have the responsibility to reach and convert them, to bring them to salvation to be used by God to that end, we have to get close to them. And when we go in for that kind of an attack, we're going to have to realize that when we get involved with the ones that are really committed, not just the convinced but the committed, the propagators, the leaders, when we get close to the hard core souls committed to their deceptions, we're in danger, we are in serious danger because these apostates are so deeply deceived so profoundly deceived. Very often they are articulate, they have been trained to articulate their system. They know how to give the answers. They're subtle and satanic. They are the missionaries of error. They are the advocates of error. They are the teachers of their lies. And when you get near them, it's a dangerous place to be.

So he says we have to hate even the garment polluted by the flesh. The fear is that we might be corrupted by their evil. They are so evil that we if we get too close might be corrupted. Can't make a friendship out of this, you can't get intimate and accepting with these people, you have to understand they are the most adept enemies of the truth, they are the most highly skilled agents of the kingdom of darkness. And you don't want to get anywhere near their corruption. Folks, the language here at the end of verse 23 is as coarse, it is as graphic as any language anywhere in Scripture. He says this, "Hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." Hating means to despise, *miseo*, garment. There are two words basically for the clothing that people wore in that day, *chitona(?)*and *himation*. *Himation was*the outer tunic. *Chitoma(?)*was your underwear and they were underwear, against their body. This is *chitoma*, *chitona*, rather, with a *noon, chitona*. This is their underwear and he says, "Be very careful, almost phobic, as you try to give mercy, the mercy of the truth to these people, despising even the underwear polluted, *spiloo*, stained and it means stained in a filthy manner, it means defiled by the flesh.

The analogy is this, I think you understand what it is, filthy underwear, stained by bodily function. You wouldn't pick up somebody's filthy, stained underwear, you wouldn't do that because you wouldn't want to be defiled by that physically and he's saying you have to treat these false teachers the same way because what comes out of them is a filthy pollution and you're in danger if you get too close of being defiled by it.

Now if you ever question what God's view of false systems is, that's it....that's it. It's that kind of thing that loosed Martin Luther on some of his scatological references, which we will not quote. For those of you who don't know what that means, look it up. Isaiah put it this way, "All our righteousness is as

filthy rags," that was the Hebrew word for menstrual cloth. And the Apostle Paul said, "I look at the Judaism of my life and I consider it all dung," very coarse language. Apostate Judaism is manure, filth and we are warned that when you get engaged with these people and you get involved with these people in an effort to show them mercy, take care that you don't pick up the filth because that's filth. And just as filth comes out of your body to stain your undergarment, spiritual filth comes out of your fallen flesh to pollute your life and it can get transmitted. That is the biblical view, that is the divine view of false religion. And when you remember in Revelation 3 when the Lord wrote a letter to the church at Sardis, He said, "You're dead." How did that church die? How did Sardis become a dead church? You have a name that you're alive, verse 1, but you're dead. How did they die? I'll tell you how, verse 4, "You have only a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments." That was the problem. Everybody got filthy because they were overexposed to the spiritual terrorists and they were undiscerning and the church died as a result of it. False doctrine and the wickedness of those who teach it and believe it stains the soul. Evangelism is necessary. It is to be personal, but it is dangerous. All forms of false religion are seen as a filth and a pollution. That's why we talk so much about Christian education around here. Why would I want to expose the most precious commodity I have, Christian young people, to pollution? It's dangerous but it has to be done. And we have to do it with discernment, with prayer, and with caution.

Listen to Romans 16:17, Paul's sort of signing off. "I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned and turn away from them, for such men are slaves not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting." You just have to be so careful.

Failure to confront spiritual terrorists...well, you're in Revelation 2 and 3...failure to confront spiritual terrorists destroyed the church at Pergamos, they allowed some who held the teaching of Balaam, they allowed some who held the teaching of the Nicolaitans and it destroyed the church and the Lord says, "If you don't repent, I'm going to come quickly and make war against you with the sword out of My mouth." It destroyed the church at Thyatira because they tolerated the woman Jezebel who taught the people to commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. As I told you, it destroyed the church at Sardis and soiled their garments. And on the other hand, there was the church of Smyrna in Revelation 2 that maintained its purity and the church at Philadelphia that maintained its purity and God promised them a blessing.

Churches that stop spiritual terrorism at its border by profiling them, understanding who they are, protect themselves and then face the incredible responsibility to give those same terrorists the gospel. To this we are called, to this great challenge. And somebody is going to say, "This could be scary. This could really be scary. Does this mean that if I get involved in this and I get myself soiled by this false doctrine and I begin to question certain things and I maybe get caught up in some of their sins and that I'm going to lose my salvation?" Well, that's why the benediction comes at the end of Jude. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from...what?...stumbling or falling, and to make you stand

in the presence of His glory blameless and with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, authority before all time now and forever, Amen." You're not going to lose your salvation, but you will if you're engaged with these people and you're not doing it with fear and great care, you will soil your garments. You may not lose your salvation but the church will be the victim and your own life polluted by the defilement. It's not an easy thing to do, it takes the most care and the most vigilance and the disciplines of edification, prayer, living in obedience and having a heavenly perspective to protect us. Let's pray.

Father, we come again at the end of this wonderful Lord's day and we thank You for Your Word, it's just so rich and so penetratingly insightful. We want to be faithful, we want to be able to reach those that are the confused and those that are the convinced and even those that are the committed. It seems like there isn't anything more wonderful and exciting than to see a false teacher converted, somebody who is hardcore, committed, part of error and apostasy repent and it seems rare, very rare. But we would be faithful to feel mercy and to show it with fear so that we don't become stained by getting too close to such people, so that we don't lose our own conviction and become polluted by their errors and even tolerant of their iniquities. Keep Your church pure, keep Your church vigilant, protect Your church that we might win that war on spiritual terrorism that You might be exalted in Your church, receive the glory, we pray. Amen.

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