

LIVE BY TRUTH: REMEMBER (Jude 17-18)

His name was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. He was born in the Soviet Union and served in the Red Army during World War II at which time he was a committed atheist despite having grown up in the Russian Orthodox Church, and he was a believer in Communism. Shortly before the war ended, it was discovered that Solzhenitsyn had written a letter to a friend in which he criticized Joseph Stalin. That was one thing you were not to do—to criticize Joseph Stalin. Solzhenitsyn was arrested, tried, and convicted of anti-Soviet propaganda. He was sentenced to 8 years in the labor camps.

It was in those labor camps that Solzhenitsyn lost his faith in Communism and returned to faith in God. Solzhenitsyn became a writer, a world-famous writer. In time, his writing ran afoul of the party line. He became an embarrassment to the Soviet authorities. On February 12, 1974 (18 years before my daughter was born and 165 years after Abraham Lincoln was born) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was arrested, and the next day he was deported to West Germany and stripped of his Soviet Union citizenship.

On the day he was arrested, Solzhenitsyn wrote an essay to the Russian people. He entitled his essay, “Live Not by Lies.” Just last year, an American author, Rod Dreher, wrote and published a book, and he borrowed that title. In his essay, Solzhenitsyn encouraged his people who were being bullied and harassed by their own government. In his essay, he acknowledged that it was tempting to think that there was nothing they could do about their situation. They didn’t have the power or clout to change the way things were. He pointed out there was one thing they should do, and if the Soviet people did it, it would make all the difference. Listen to what he wrote:

The simplest and most accessible key to our self-neglected liberation is this: personal non-participation in lies. Though lies may conceal everything, though lies may control everything, we should be obstinate about this one small point: let them be in control but without any help from any of us . . . when people renounce lies it cuts short their existence. Like a virus, they can survive only in a living organism.

Let us admit it: we have not matured enough to march into the squares and shout the truth out loud or to express aloud what we think. It is not necessary. It’s dangerous . . .

Our path is not that of giving conscious support to lies about anything at all. And once we realize where the perimeters of falsehood are . . . our path is to walk away from this gangrenous boundary.

Solzhenitsyn’s ideology prevailed. Soviet Communism’s did not. In 1990, his Soviet citizenship was restored. In 1991 the Soviet Union dissolved. In 1994, he returned to Russia where he lived until he died in 2008 at the ripe age of 89.

Solzhenitsyn told us what we are not to do. We are not to live by lies. I want to say the same thing but state in the positive. Today’s text tells us what we are to do. We are to

“Live by Truth.” Look with me at Jude 17-23.

Last week, we listened as Jude railed against the false teachers, those ungodly people who crept into the church and perverted the grace of God and the truth of God. Jude urged us to contend, to fight for the faith. There are parallels between today’s text and v. 3 of Jude. Both are addressed to the *beloved*. The true people of God are beloved by God, and they are beloved by those who are called to serve the people of God. While v. 3 calls upon us to contend for the faith, the verses in today’s text shows us what that looks like.

We contend for the faith when we live by truth. Our text shows us three ways in which we live by truth. There is too much here to cover in one sermon; so, I am going to break this into three messages. We are going to confine today’s message to vv. 17-19 which tell us to **remember**. Next week we will cover vv. 20-21 which encourage us to **remain**. The week after that we will examine vv. 22-23, which call upon us to **rescue**.

Our message today has just one main point:

We Live by Truth When We Remember

Verses 17-19 tell us what we are to remember. It appears that Jude was written soon after Peter wrote 2 Peter, and there may be a portion of that letter that Jude has in mind when he mentions the predictions of the apostles. Let’s turn backward a few pages and look at 2 Peter 3:1-3. The word translated as *scoffers* is found only in 2 Peter and Jude. In 2 Peter it seems that the scoffers were scoffing about the return of Jesus, but in Jude the scoffers were mocking the moral requirements of God because they gave their passions free reign.

Jude used the plural of *apostle*; so, Peter, however, wasn’t the only one in the NT to warn about false prophets. Listen to what Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus. It is recorded by Luke in Acts 20:28-30.

²⁸ “So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. ²⁹ I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following” (NLT).

Such warnings also appear in Paul’s letters. Consider 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. ² These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. ³ They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth (NLT).

Now, listen to what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. It seems amazingly like the world in which we live.

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, [insulting towards] God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. ⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (NLT).

John, in the shortest letter of the NT, weighed in on the subject of false teachers. Listen to 2 John 7 & 10:

⁷ I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement (NLT).

Does this mean that you shouldn't invite a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon missionary into your home if she or he were to ring your door bell? Let's consider that verse a little more carefully. He says, "If anyone comes to your meeting" don't invite him or her into your home. We need to be aware that for the first 300 years of church history, there was no such thing as a church building. There were no buildings with steeples or crosses on top with pews on the inside and a pulpit behind which the pastor stood. And there were no choir lofts or fellowship halls. Believers met inside of homes for worship, fellowship, and instruction. John is saying, "If you are in your home with the church having a meeting, and a person comes along who has different ideas about Jesus that don't square with what you have been taught, don't let him come in and teach that stuff. Just send him on his way."

In addition to the apostles, Jesus Himself warned that false teachers were coming. Jesus warned in Matthew 24:4, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray." Then, He adds in v.11, "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray."

According to Jude, false teachers are worldly people who do not have the Spirit of God living within them, but worst of all, they cause division. I did an Internet search, and more than one site claimed that there are 45,000 different Christian denominations around the world. That is not the number of churches. That is the number of denominations of just the Christian faith. Some denominations number in the millions and some just 100 members.

I want you to know that Satan absolutely loves religion. I imagine that Satan uses religion more than anything else to lead people astray and sideline them from coming to know God and serve Him. I have met far more people who won't attend church because of a bad experience in church than I do people who won't come because they don't believe in God.

Religion is a great tool to confuse people, to hurt people, to fool people, and to divide people. We are told that it is impolite to talk about two things at a dinner party—politics and religion. Those two things divide people. All we have left to talk about is the weather, and nowadays, the weather is political, too.

Since we live in America, we think everyone is becoming secular and irreligious. That is not what is happening across the world. Just the opposite. Our world is becoming more and more religious.

In his book *The Triumph of Faith*, Rodney Stark writes:

The world is more religious than it has ever been. Around the globe, 4 out of every 5 people claim to belong to an organized faith, and many of the rest say they attend worship services. In Latin America, Pentecostal Protestant churches have converted tens of millions, and Catholics are going to Mass in unprecedented numbers. There are more churchgoing Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else on earth, and China may soon become home of the most Christians. Meanwhile, although not growing as rapidly as Christianity, Islam enjoys far higher levels of member commitment than it has for many centuries, and the same is true for Hinduism. In fact, of all the great world religions, only Buddhism may not be growing. Furthermore, in every nook and cranny left by organized faiths, all manner of unconventional and unchurched supernaturalism is booming: there are more occult healers than medical doctors in Russia; 38 percent of the French believe in astrology; 35 percent of the Swiss agree that “some fortune tellers really can foresee the future,” and nearly everyone in Japan is careful to have a new car blessed by a Shinto priest.

Religion and spirituality are at an all-time high around the world. While maybe not here in America, religion is booming in many other parts of the world. It is ironic that the West—Europe and the United States—birthed the missionary movement. We sent missionaries and Bible translators all over the world, and now Europe and America are in desperate need of missionaries to come reach us with the good news of Jesus because large numbers of us have fallen victim to lies. Our godless culture is not living by truth; we are living by lies, and those lies are killing us.

For instance, next door to this church is a dispensary. It sells products made with marijuana. I don't have a problem with that. That is now legal in Oklahoma. Medical science has proven that there is medicinal and therapeutic value to be found in cannabis. I don't have a problem with all of that. What I object to is that painted on a wall facing church property are the words, “Weed from the Devil's Garden.” That is a lie. Satan has created nothing, absolutely nothing. Satan only misuses and abuses what God has created. We read in Genesis 1:11 these words:

¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹² The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and

trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day (NLT).

The Devil doesn't have a garden. He might have a laboratory, but he doesn't have a garden. What Satan specializes in doing is telling lies. He's good at it. He's had a lot of practice. In John 8:44 Jesus addressed His opponents.

For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies (NLT).

Satan is a no good, rotten liar who is intent on destroying you, and he is attempting to use lies to do so. Those lies may come to you from the mouths, pens, and press releases of various people. They may stand behind a pulpit in a church, or in behind a lectern in a university classroom, or in front of a camera from a television newsroom. These lies may come in the script of a movie or in the lyrics of a song. The purveyors of these lies may wear a clerical collar, a lab coat, or a tweed jacket. These lies might appear in your newspaper or in a text book, but ultimately, all these lies have a singular source—the enemy of our souls.

If he can get you to believe the lie, he will wreak havoc in your life. Here are some of the lies:

- *Sexual expression is the pathway to freedom and fulfillment.* The truth is that when we express ourselves sexually outside the bonds of marriage, it leads to bondage and heartache.
- *Your primary identity is found in your sexuality.* The truth is that our identity is to be found in Jesus Christ. In Him we move, and live, and have our being.
- *The more money and stuff you have, the happier you will be.* Jesus, however, said, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
- *When you are unhappy, it is someone else's fault.* The Christian faith teaches that we are responsible for the choices we make.
- *You are worthless, and God doesn't love you.* The truth is that we are created in the image of God, and He showed His love for us by sending His Son to die on a cross to purchase our redemption.
- *You can appreciate the Bible, but things are different now; so, you shouldn't base your life on such an ancient, outdated book.* The Bible says, "The grass withers, and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord remains forever."
- *You can't; so, quit trying.* Paul claimed, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."
- *God won't; so, quit trusting.* But the Bible teaches our God "is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think." That is why we sing: "Have faith in God. He's on His throne; Have faith in God, He watches o'er His own. He cannot fail.

He must prevail; Have faith in God. Have faith in God.”

And there are so many other lies that Satan uses to trip people up and take them out. That is why we must know the truth and speak the truth. It is the truth that defeats the lies.

The first step we are given to help us live by truth is we are to remember. Remember, we are at war. Remember, the enemy’s weapon is falsehood. Remember to gird yourself with the belt of truth. In Ephesians 6, Paul lists the armor of God that every Christian is to wear. This armor is meant to protect you. The very first piece of armor that Paul mention is the belt of truth. The belt keeps everything else in place. If you don’t fasten the belt of truth, you are going to be caught with your pants down, and that is a very vulnerable position.

One of the most successful ad campaigns in history asked the iconic question, “Got milk?” The Church needs to start a new campaign featuring the question, “Got truth?” That is what we have, and that is what we must use to combat the lies the enemy is spreading.

I want to close this message by telling a story that is related to today’s date—October 31st. When most people hear that date, they think of Halloween. I think of something else. This date is also known as Reformation Day. It was on October 31, 1517 (504 years ago) that an Augustinian monk who served as both a priest and a university professor took a hammer and nailed a sheaf of papers to the Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The sound of that hammer striking the door was soon heard around the world. That monk was a man named Martin Luther, and he nailed what are called the 95 theses to the Church door. They are better understood as 95 complaints against the Roman Catholic Church of which he was a part. He believed that many of the church’s practices were in opposition to what the Bible clearly teaches.

Someone took those 95 complaints had them printed, and they were sent throughout Europe. It started a firestorm. We call in the Protestant Reformation. The word Protestant comes from the word Protest. Protestants are those who protested against the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church.

Out of the Protestant Reformation, there are five key teaching that arose. Those five teachings affirm five truths that had been lost and were recovered. They are called the five *solas*. They are five Latin phrases. Let me list them for you and give you the English translation:

- Sola scriptura (by Scripture alone)
- Sola fide (by faith alone)
- Sola gratia (by grace alone)
- Solus Christus (through Christ alone)
- Soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone)

We believe that the teaching and practice of the Church is to be governed by God’s word alone. We don’t need the Bible plus Church tradition or the Bible plus what

ecclesiastical authorities have said. We don't need the Bible plus something else. We are guided by the Bible alone.

The last phrase is self-explanatory—Glory to God alone. Life is not all about us. It is all about Him. We are here to please and honor God alone.

It is the middle three that deal with our eternal salvation. We are saved by faith alone, not faith plus works, not faith plus obedience. We are saved by faith alone.,

We are saved by grace alone, not grace plus the blessing of the church; we are saved by grace alone.

Finally, we are saved by Christ alone. We put our faith solely in Him, in His death upon the cross and resurrection from the grave.

When you come across any teaching that contradicts these truths, and you will if you pay attention, it is false teaching. Reject it and refute it. Remember that. That is something worth remembering.