

LIVE BY TRUTH: RESCUE **(Jude 22-23)**

It happened in the fall of 1987. That was 34 years ago. It captured the attention of our entire nation. On October 14th of that year, an 18-month-old girl was playing in the backyard of her aunt's house in Midland, Texas. That is when little Jessica fell down an uncapped well casing. She came to a stop 22-feet below ground. That is where she remained for 58 hours until she was successfully rescued.

To get to her, rescuers drilled a parallel hole and then a horizontal one to reach her. When they got close, little Baby Jessica, as she was known to the country, was heard by the rescuers singing, "Winnie the Pooh."

Paramedic Robert O'Donnell was the one who reached her, extricated her, and handed her to another paramedic who carried her to a waiting ambulance. I remember seeing that rescue live on TV. Maybe you did, too.

Today, Jessica is 35 years old and lives with her husband and two children in a house that is two miles from where she fell into that hole.

Courageous rescuers & daring rescues are the ingredients for great stories. It is no surprise that some of the best loved and most successful motion pictures have been about rescues.

I wouldn't say they were necessarily great movies, but when I was growing up in the 1970's, disaster movies were all the rage—*Airport*, *The Poseidon Adventure*, and *The Towering Inferno*. In all of these movies, a disaster had either happened or was about to happen, and there were people who needed to be rescued.

A couple of my favorite rescue movies are *Apollo 13* and *Saving Private Ryan*. The first is based on a real event, and the second is inspired by a real story. In the first instance, great minds set about the task of bringing three people safely home. In the second instance, great sacrifice is made to bring one person home safely.

This morning we sang about rescue, and now, we are going to talk about rescue because that is the focus of today's text. Look with me at the second to last book of the NT, the small letter of Jude. It was written by the brother of Jesus, just as the letter known as James was written by another brother of Jesus. All three men had Mary as their mother. Only James and Judas had Joseph as their father. Jesus was the virgin born son of Mary.

Let me do a quick recap of the letter. Jude claimed his original intention was to write a letter extolling the common salvation that he and his readers enjoyed. Something occurred that changed his mind and his letter. He became aware of the activity of false teachers. He writes this letter to warn his readers of false teachers. He calls upon them to take action. He appeals to his readers to contend for the faith (v. 3).

Then, from vv. 4-16, Jude profiles the false teachers. In our day, racial profiling is not allowed. A TSA agent can't pull a Middle Eastern man out of line and frisk him and use as his excuse, "Well, he looked like a terrorist to me." He may be in an airport, but that excuse won't fly.

Jude wasn't worried about being politically correct. He is saying to his readers,

“There are spiritual terrorists who are infiltrating the Church of Jesus Christ. They want to blow up the church with their false teaching. You need to identify these ungodly people.” First, he describes their conduct. This is how they act. Then, he describes their character. This is what they are like.

I want you to notice the difference between this section and what follows:

- Verse 4 begins with the words, “For certain people.”
- Verse 8 and 10 mention, “these people.”
- Verse 11 uses the words “them” and “they.”
- Verse 12 uses the words “These” and “they.”
- Verses 14 and 16 refer to “these.”

Jude uses those words while profiling these false teachers. But notice he starts v. 17, “But you.” Then, in v. 18, he calls to mind what the apostles said to “you.” Last Sunday morning we looked at vv. 20-21. Again, v. 20 starts out, “But you.” In v. 21, Jude instructs those believers, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.”

In this passage, Jude is returning to his initial call that his readers fight for the faith. You fight for the faith when you live by truth. He is saying, “This is how you live by truth. First, you are to **remember** that we are in a war. The apostles had already warned you about the coming of false teachers. They are here. Second, you need to **remain** in the love of God. You do that by building up the church, by praying in the Spirit, and by waiting for the coming of Jesus.” First, you are to remember. Second, you are to remain. Today, we come to the third thing we are to in order to live by truth and to fight the false teachers. We are to **rescue** (vv. 22-23).

We will learn three things that we as rescuers are to do.

We Rescuers Are to Be Gentle with the Doubters

Look again at v. 22.

What does Jude mean when he refers to *those who doubt*? John MacArthur preached a sermon on this passage in which he calls the doubting *the confused*. The confused are those who have heard the lies of the enemy. They have heard the false teaching of the false teachers except they don’t realize that what they heard is false. They don’t recognize that the lies are lies. What they heard has confused them. They are trying to reconcile what they heard before with what they’re hearing now. They are trying to make it fit together.

One of the traits of maturity is that you are able to detect lies. If you are mature, when you hear someone say or teach something that doesn’t line up with truth, you say, “That’s not true.” You are not easily fooled.

On the other hand, those who have not been Christians long or who have not grown in their faith, they are not very good lie detectors. They can be fooled. They believe what they hear. They believe what they read.

They might say, “I know this has to be true because I read an article about it on the

Internet.”

Have you noticed that young children will believe just about anything you say? You could say to a kindergarten student, “Did you know that the moon is really made of cheese?”

Really?

“Yeah,” you say. “We sent astronauts to the moon. They collected rocks and came back with them. Scientists tested those rocks and discovered they are made of really hard cheese.”

Wow!

The child will believe you. He has not grown to the point that he can recognize what is untrue.

Paul referred to the believers in Corinth as “infants.” He wrote to them, “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2).

Years ago, I read that more Mormons come from Southern Baptist churches than from any other denomination. I have no reason to believe that it no longer true. That is true in part because the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Protestant denomination in America. It is also true because we are not doing a very good job of training new believers what the Bible says. As a result, we are not equipping them to recognize error and falsehood for what it is.

In a sermon, Alistair Begg said, “Clueless Christians in every generation will always be easy prey for clever charlatans.” There are many clever charlatans today.

If you are a clueless Christian, don’t settle for remaining one. If you come across a clueless Christian, don’t let them stay that way. If you discover that they are confused, have mercy on them. Help them get clarity. Lead them away from falsehood, and lead them to truth, the truth of God’s word.

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, “Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”

Of the doubters, the confused, Begg also said, “We need to help people to doubt their doubts.” When you find a confused person, you can say to them, “Let me show you this verse. Hey, here is a good book that addresses what you are struggling with. Read this, and I’ll check back with you in a couple of weeks. We’ll talk about it.”

John MacArthur uses Psalm 1:1 to explain why he is such a supporter and proponent of Christian education. That verse says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.” It matters what your child or your grandchild’s teacher believes about the Bible and about God. That precious, impressionable child is going to believe what he or she hears; so, who is that is going to be teaching him or her? Will it be a wicked person, an unrepentant sinner, a scoffer who does not believe the Bible? Or will the teacher be a follower of Christ, a person who lives by and honors the word of God? It really does matter.

One person warned, “If you send your child to Caesar’s school, don’t be surprised

when he or she becomes a Roman.”

Jude tells us to have mercy on the doubter, the confused person. That means that we don't write them off; we don't remain unconcerned; we don't let them fend for themselves or expect them to figure it out on their own.

A loving parent is not going to let a son or daughter raise themselves.

When Lance turned 16, neither his mom nor I gave him a set of car keys and said, “Good luck. I hope you figure it out.” In fact, the State of Oklahoma says we can't do that. After he got a driver's permit and before he can get a driver's license, he has to have so many hours of supervised driving. I will let him drive to school or home from work or just out practice driving. I will sit in the passenger seat and say every now and then, “You can't do that. It is better to do this. When you find yourself in this situation, here's what you want to do.” And sometimes, I will yell, “Stop.” Being urgently insistent can be a form of being merciful.

New Christians or untrained Christians often need that kind of supervision. If we truly care, we will provide it.

Jude says a second thing about what we rescuers are to do.

We Rescuers Are to Be Forceful with the Deceived

Sometimes, the confused doubter becomes convinced of the deception. He believes the lie. He accepts the false teaching as being the truth. He is deceived. He walks away from the faith and into the camp of the enemy.

At this point, gentleness is no longer called for. Being gentle is not what is needed. More urgent action must be taken. You might call it tough love.

If a person is not paying attention and is about to walk off the curb and into oncoming traffic, you don't say, “Excuse me, may I have your attention.” You grab them. You restrain them. You hold them back. Otherwise, that person will become a statistic, and you will not sleep well at night.

When Jude uses the phrase “snatching them out of the fire,” he appears to be using a metaphor for hell. The person who has wandered or walked away is in danger of going to hell. We can't just sit by and watch that happen. We don't physically grab hold of them, but we plead with them. We explicitly tell them of the danger they are in and exhort them to turn away from that falsehood and return to the safe path.

Maybe they have believed the lie that Jesus isn't God. Maybe they have concluded that to get to heaven they have to be part of this group and engage in this set of works. We need to actively disabuse them of this false belief and impress upon them the truth and call for them to repent of the falsehood and commit themselves to the truth.

At the beginning of this message, I mentioned the rescue of Baby Jessica. That happened in 1987. In 1989 a movie came out entitled, *Everybody's Baby: The Rescue of Jessica McClure*. There is a powerful scene in that movie in which a physician is coaching Robert O'Donnell the paramedic who was to go into the hole and pull Baby Jessica out. The doctor, who happens to be a woman, says to him, “If you have to break bones, her arms, her legs, don't worry. As long as her head, back, and neck are intact, we

can fix the rest. Whatever breaks, breaks . . .” Moments later she adds, “Remember, break whatever you have to, but get her out.”

At the climatic moment in the movie when O’Donnell is down in the hole trying to get Baby Jessica out, and struggling to do so, the camera cuts to the doctor who is standing over the top of the hole. She is yelling instructions to O’Donnell. The instructions are simple. In fact, they consist of just one word that is repeated again and again.

When a woman is giving birth, at just the right moment, the doctor may urge, “Push, push.”

This deep hole in the soil of Midland could be viewed as a birth canal, the doctor leans down over the recently dug tunnel and yells, not “push” but, “Pull, pull, pull, Robert, you can do it.” Robert O’Donnell grabs hold of Baby Jessica’s foot, and he pulls, little by little, and he delivers her. He rescues her.

Who do you need to pull to safety?

Many Christians are timid. We don’t want to offend the lost. We are afraid we are going to scare them away. Jesus said, “Whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18). According to the Bible, the lost person is going to hell because he or she has not believed in Jesus. So, if we don’t proclaim Jesus to the lost person because we are afraid of offending them, where are we afraid they going to go to—hell number 2? They are going to hell already.

Paul wrote, “Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Dear Christian, if there is someone you love who has walked away from Jesus, grab hold of their heart with the truth of the gospel and snatch them from hell.

There is a third and final thing that we rescuers are to do.

We Rescuers Are to Be Careful with the Deceivers

In his message on this passage, John MacArthur made an interesting point. Listen to what he said as he explained this spiritual war that the Church is fighting:

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 are called to convert 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 . . . 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 would recognize the reality of their spiritual condition and turn from it.

You need to realize that know more than the doubter. That is why you can be merciful, gentle, and patient as you work them and encourage them. You also know what

the deceived person does not know, and because of what you know, you must be forceful with him or her and snatch them, as it were, from the flames of hell.

Here's the problem, and here's where we need to be careful. You may or may not know as much as the deceiver, the false teacher, the wolf who comes in and ravages the flock. It occurs to me that Satan knows the Bible better than you do. He can quote more verses than you can. Of course, he misquotes, and misapplies, and misuses the Bible, and he is so subtle that you may not be able to detect where and how he is twisting it. There are false teachers who have doctoral degrees in theology. They have letters after their name. They know languages you don't know. They've read books you've never read. They have even written books.

You and I need to be careful with such people.

I want you to look with me at the last letter Paul wrote. Shortly before his death, Paul wrote a letter to Timothy, a young minister. He warned Timothy about the false teachers who would come. In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Paul told Timothy how to deal with them. He was to correct the false teachers and do so gently.

You don't want to pick a fight or argue with a trained, knowledgeable, false teacher. You must might lose the argument, and if that is done in the company of others, you might do more harm than good. You better know you are ready before you agree or attempt to debate a false teacher.

It is possible that God can win that person with your love rather than with your logic. Deal with that person gently and prayerfully.

Be careful that you do not get sucked in either by the false teacher's beliefs or by his behavior.

I find a couple of things of particular interest in v. 23. Jude uses the word *fear* and appears to encourage his readers to be afraid. Elsewhere in the Bible, over and over, hundreds of times, in fact, the Bible says "do not be afraid; fear not." Yet here, Jude tells us to show mercy with fear.

When I go to the hospital to visit with patients who have a communicable disease, I am required to use personal, protective equipment. I put on a paper gown, latex gloves, a facemask, or a face shield, maybe even those paper booties over my dress shoes. By doing that, we are showing healthy respect for the seriousness of a contagious disease. We take precautions that so it does not spread to us and others.

Jude is cautioning his readers to have a healthy respect for what they are facing lest they become a victim to the deadly contagion of bad theology and a sinful lifestyle.

The second thing I find interesting is the metaphor he uses at the end of v. 23. My version uses the words, "the garment stained by the flesh." That is an extremely polite way of expressing the word picture Jude give us. The Greeks had two words for the garments people wore. There was a word for the outer garment and another one for the inner garment that was worn against the skin. It is the inner garment that is spoken of here. We would call it *underwear*. The words "stained by the flesh" refers to fecal matter.

To put it bluntly, Jude compares the behavior of false teachers to underwear stained with poop. He is saying, "Be careful with what you pick up. It might be something you don't want to deal with and handle."

Last week, I mentioned that in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, Jesus had seven separate messages to seven different churches. I want to draw your attention to one of those messages, and with it we will close. Turn forward in your Bible just a few pages to Revelation 3:1-6.

Jesus is seeking to rescue this church from an impending disaster. The word for garment this time is the one for the outer garment, the robe, the one that everybody sees. The word for soiled means *to stain, to defile, to smear*.

All of us have sinned. Jesus, however, came to cleanse us from our unrighteousness. If we will allow Jesus to blot out our sin, He will never blot out our name from the Book of Life. If, however, we do not allow Jesus to take away our sin, He will take away our name from the Book of Life. If you will confess His name here to others, He will confess your name there before His Father.

God wants you to be a rescuer. Before you can become a rescuer, you must be rescued. Jesus wants to rescue you. Let Him do that very thing.