

The Letter That Had to Wait (v.3)

VERSE 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you (Ἀγαπητοί ποιούμενος πάσαν σπουδὴν ράφειν ὑμῖν [*adj.voc.m.p., agapetos, beloved, dear friends, + pres.mid.pt.n.m.s., poieo, do, make, + adj.acc.f.s., pas, all, every, + acc.f.s., spoude, speed; diligence; “effort”, + pres.act.infin., grapho, write, + pro.dat.p., su, you*]) **about our common salvation** (περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας [*prep.w/def.art.w/adj.gen.f.s., κοινός, koinos, common, + gen.f.s., soteria, salvation, + pro.gen.p., ego, “our”*]), **I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith** (ἀνάγκην ἔσχον γράψαι ὑμῖν παρακαλῶν ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι τῇ πίστει [*acc.f.s., ἀνάγκη, anagke, necessity, compulsion, + aor.act.ind.1.s., echo, have; “felt”, + aor.act.infin., grapho, write, + pro.dat.p., su, + pres.act.pt.n.m.s., parakaleo, exhort, summon, implore; “earnestly”, + pres.midd.infin., ἐπαγωνίζομαι, epagonizomai, make a strenuous effort, struggle for; “contend”; IX, + def.art.w/dat.f.s., pistis, faith {body of truth}*]) **which was once for all handed down to the saints** (παραδοθείση ἅπαξ τοῖς ἁγίοις [*aor.pass.pt.dat.f.s., paradidomi, hand over, + adv., hapax, once, once for all, + def.art.w/adj.dat.m.p., hagios, holy; saint*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. Jude’s brief greeting concluded, he plunges at once into the circumstances that compelled him to write this letter.
2. He has felt compelled to do so, he explains, by alarm at the threat poised by certain heretics to the spiritual well-being of believers to whom this letter was first sent.
3. The Church was threatened by the teaching of innovators of suspect orthodoxy and morality.
4. The exact import of the participial clause –“while I was making every effort to write to you...I felt the necessity” – is not easy to disentangle.
5. According to the generally accepted interpretation of these words, it had been his earnest intention “to write to you about our common salvation”, i.e. (presumably) to prepare a general and positive presentation of the faith for their benefit; but this project had to be interrupted by the urgent need to deal with a particular critical situation.
6. Various interpreters fail to detect in his words any implication of a change of plan.
7. To them the phrases “our common salvation” and “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” are not antithetical, but complimentary.
8. All the writer is saying is that “being very eager to write” his correspondents, he has been constrained by the emergency.
9. Both exegeses make good sense and are syntactically possible, but in favor of the former it is urged:
 - a. That the latter makes the sentence unnecessarily labored and repetitive.
 - b. That the difference of tense between the two infinitives “to write” (the first is present tense, the second is aorist) seems to distinguish a general intention which fell short of accomplishment from a concrete action carried through.

- c. That the structure and wording of the sentence suggest a contrast between a general essay on the faith and a peremptory exhortation to defend it.
10. If we accept the former exegesis, it is fruitless to speculate whether the writer ever fulfilled his original plan or not.
 11. The scenario presented, incidentally, is entirely life-like, and agrees well with the view taken in the Introduction that Jude is a genuine letter directed at a particular situation and is not a general homily.
 12. For the affectionate “Beloved/Dear friends” (literally, “loved”), see v. 1b and 2Pet. 2:11.
 13. By our “common salvation”, some think he means the salvation which he, a Jewish Christian, and they, Gentile Christians, share alike.
 14. But in the absence of any other reference in the letter to such a distinction, this is artificial.
 15. Almost certainly, the expression means “the salvation which we Christians share in common”.
 16. It brings out the corporate nature of salvation as understood by Judaism, with its consciousness of being the people of God, and even more vividly by Christianity, with its conviction of union with Christ.
 17. This is one of the most characteristic differences between it and Hellenistic piety, in which salvation (esp. of the mystery cults) tended to be a private experience of the individual.
 18. The Greek phrase “while I was making every effort” contains a present continuous participle, which refers to Jude’s interrupted studies with a view to publishing a detailed doctrinal treatise on “our common salvation”.
 19. We have such a detailed treatise in our Book of Romans.
 20. Jude was much engaged in this project when circumstances redirected his energies.
 21. In the words “I felt the necessity” (or “I found it necessary”), the Greek verb (aor.act.ind., *echo*) is aorist, thus standing in contrast to the present linear participle “making every effort”.
 22. He has been driven by alarming news “to write” (aorist infinitive versus present infinitive in the preceding clause of *grapho*, “to write”) in such a fashion as “appealing” (pres.act.part. of *parakaleo*) to his audience to “contend earnestly for” their convictions.
 23. The verb (pres.dep.infin., *epagonizomai*) is exceptionally strong, and the picture conjured up by it and its cognates is of athletics, a wrestling match or some other contest at the games.
 24. This metaphor is vivid in the Pastorals, which speak of “the good fight of the faith”, or simply “the good fight” (1Tim. 6:12; 2Tim. 4:7ff).
 25. Paul draws on the arena, stadium, or battlefield to drive home the rigorous demands of the Christian life (1Cor. 9:24-27; Eph. 6:10-17) or of the apostolic ministry (Col. 1:29).
 26. The Greek writers never tire of comparing the life of virtue to the strenuous training and toilsome encounters of athletes (Plutarch, Mor. 593de).
 27. Here, the cause that needs vigorous defense is “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”.
 28. This is an extremely important expression which, taken in conjunction with “our common salvation”, adds precision to our author’s conception of Christianity.
 29. Clearly “the faith” is not man’s response to the doctrinal message, but to the actual message itself.
 30. Faith is used here in the objective sense of revealed truth/doctrine (cp. Acts. 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; 1Cor. 16:13; 2Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:25,27; Col. 1:23; 1Tim. 3:9, 13; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10,21; 2Tim. 1:13; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:1,13; Jude 1:3).

31. Moreover, it “has been delivered”, i.e., handed down, committed, and entrusted with the idea of further transmission within the Church.
32. The agents of the action of this verb are human beings (see Lk. 1:2; Acts 16:4; Rom. 6:17; 1Cor. 11:2; 2Thess. 2:15; 3:6; 2Tim. 2:1ff).
33. The custodians are “the saints”, or the Church at large.
34. The qualifying adverb “once for all” points to the apostolic era (first century AD).
35. During the period of the alpha Church, the deposit was made.
36. By the time Jude wrote, the process was well advanced.
37. This same adverb (*hapax*) is used again in v.5 in connection with the consummation of a process.
38. Apostolic Christianity is viewed here as a system of revealed teaching/doctrine, which is by its very nature unalterable and normative.
39. Apostolic teaching, not whatever is the current theological fad, is the hallmark of authentic Christianity.
40. Because Christianity is a historical faith, the witness of the original hearers and their circle, the apostles, is determinative of what we can know about Jesus.
41. We cannot get behind the N.T. witness, nor can we get beyond it, though we must accurately interpret it to each successive generation.
42. The person whose witness outruns the N.T. canon is to be rejected (2Jn. 9–10).
43. Jude is simply displaying the same concern that his readers should adhere to the primitive apostolic faith as Paul does so frequently in his letters (cf. 2Cor. 11:3, 4; Gal. 1:8,9; Col. 2:6-8; 1Thess. 2:13; 2Thess. 3:6).
44. Here, Jude attacks antinomianism with the same passion as Paul in Galatians attacks legalism.
45. Both are perversions of the gospel.
46. The defense of this faith must be continuous, costly, and agonizing: the cost of being unfashionable, the agony of seeking to express the faith in a way that is really comprehensible to contemporary man.
47. Contending for the faith is illustrated in the verses that follow.
48. The Bible and its teachings have come under attack through the centuries and God has raised up individuals to defend it against all manner of attack.

The Occasion (v. 4)

VERSE 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed (γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι παρεισέδυσαν [conj., gar, + pro./indef.n.m.p., tis, some; certain, + n.m.p., anthropos; “persons”, + aor.act.ind.3.p., παρεισδύω, *pareidsuo*, slip in, sneak in; IX]), **those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation** (οἱ προγεγραμμένοι πάλαι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα [def.art.w/pf.pass.pt.n.m.p., προγράφω, *prographo*, write before or previously; “marked out”, 4X: Rom.15:4; Gal.3:1; Eph.3:3; Jude.1:4, + adv., palai, long ago, + prep. w/pro.acc.nt.s., houtos, this, + def.art.w/acc.nt.s., krima, judgment]), **ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness** (ἄσεβεις μετατιθέντες τὴν χάριτα ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ἀσέλγειαν [adj.n.m.p., asebes, ungodly, irreverent, + pres.act.pt.n.m.p., μετατίθημι, *metatithemi*, transfer, transplant; change, alter; 6X: Acts.7:16; Gal.1:6; Heb.7:12; 11:5; Jude.4, + def.art.w/acc.f.s., charis, grace, + pro.gen.p. ego; “our”, + def.art.w/gen.m.s., theos, + prep.w/acc.f.s., ἀσέλγεια, *aselgeia*, sexual indulgence, licentiousness; 10X: Mk.7:22; Rom.13:13; 2Cor.12:21; Gal.5:19; Eph.4:19; 1Pet.4:3; 2Pet.2:2,7,18; Jude.4]) **and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ** (καὶ ἀρνούμενοι ἡμῶν τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν [conj., + pres.dep.pt.n.m.p., ἀρνέομαι, *arneomai*, deny, + pro.gen.p., ego, + def.art.w/adj.acc.m.s., monos, only, + acc.m.s., δεσπότης, *despotes*, master, owner, + conj., + acc.m.s., kurios, + acc.m.s., Christos Iesus]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 4

1. Here is the peril that caused Jude to rush off his unexpected letter.
2. He heard of “certain persons” who had “crept in unawares”.
3. The rare verb παρεισδύω (*pareisduo*) means to “smuggle in”, and here it means to enter the fellowship of positive volition surreptitiously (done by stealth).
4. Diogenes Laertius used it of a secret return to a country; Plutarch of the insidious decline of good laws and the stealthy substitution of inferior ones.
5. It denotes a sinister and secretive activity.
6. It is similar to *pareisago* – “to bring in under false pretenses” – of Gal.2:4 and 2Pet.2:1, where the same deceitful activity of false teachers is in view.
7. Such an incursion by “ungodly persons” is wrong just because it was clandestine (cf. Gal.2:4; 2Tim.3:6).
8. Such an infiltration is always more serious when the danger comes from within (“Operation Trojan Horse”).
9. Jesus warned against those who would masquerade as sheep, but were in fact wolves in sheep’s clothing (Mt.7:15).
10. The apostles also warned against such types (Acts.20:29,30; Phil.3:2; 1Tim.4:1ff; 2Tim.3:1; 1Jn.4:1).

11. There will always be those who will be a menace to the sheep (Jn.10:1).
12. Probably the libertine heretics were itinerate teachers – a common problem in the early church (see 2Cor.10 and 11:5; 2Jn.1:10; 3Jn.1:9).
13. When Jude wrote, the infiltration of the local churches had already begun.
14. There is a contemptuous ring in “certain persons” (cf. Paul’s use of the indefinite pronoun *tines* in Gal.1:7; 2:12).
15. Those who installed themselves in the Christian communities were disseminating their false teachings *in situ* rather than from a separatist sect.
16. The situation at hand resembles that of Gal.2:4, where Paul speaks of “false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty...in order to bring us into bondage”.
17. Both Peter (Second Peter) and Jude addressed the crisis associated with this clandestine attack against the apostolic orthodoxy in the latter half of the first century AD.
18. Their teachings were so perverse and heretical that they had to operate in this fashion if they hoped to have any chance of success.
19. Before Jude characterizes their perversity, he mentions their judgment.
20. The expression “long beforehand marked out” is an interpretative attempt to make sense of the Greek expression.
21. The verb (pf.pass.pt., *prographo*, write before) is found in Eph.3:3, where Paul refers to a previous (i.e., lost) letter sent to the Ephesians where he communicated in nutshell fashion the mystery doctrine of the church (“as I wrote before in brief”).
22. In Rom.15:4 the verb is used in connection with the O.T. canon: “For whatever was written in earlier times for our instruction...”.
23. The verb is used metaphorically in Gal.3:1, where it is translated “portrayed” in connection with the vivid presentation of the crucifixion of Christ by Paul when he was with them (aor.pass.ind.).
24. The fourth and final use of the verb in the N.T. has to do with a previous written (or spoken) mention of the judgment of the false teachers specified in Second Peter and Jude.
25. The adverb (*palai*) “long ago” simply denotes time past in antithesis to the present.
26. Whether the time is short or long is determined by the context.
27. The adverb occurs 7X in the N.T.: Mt.11:21; Mk.15:44; Lk.10:13; 2Cor.12:19; Heb.1:1; 2Pet.1:9; Jude.1:4.
28. The adverb means “formerly”, without reference to duration.
29. “Long ago” is an acceptable translation in Mt.11:21 and Lk.10:13, but it could also simply be rendered “formerly”.
30. For a short period of time, see Mk.15:44.
31. In 2Cor.12:19 the words “All this time” refer to a relatively short period of time.
32. Hebrews 1:1 refers to time past, generally speaking.
33. In 2Pet.1:9 the mention of their “former sins” is a more or less recent occurrence.
34. The problem in Jude.1:4 is interpretative.
35. Is it “long beforehand”, as suggested by the English translations and the obvious reference in Mt.11:21 and Lk.15:44, or is Jude making an oblique reference to a more recent record?
36. In the absence of any written O.T. prophecy of the condemnation of the false teachers, and with the understanding that Jude was familiar and dependent upon Second Peter, the answer is at hand.
37. Jude refers to the condemnation made more explicit in Second Peter 2 (vv.3,12,17).

38. If this is the case, then the translation of the adverb as “already” makes perfect sense.
39. The proposed translation is “those who were already (or previously) marked out (or written beforehand) for this condemnation”.
40. While speaking of “this judgment”, Jude fails to specify which judgment or provide fresh details.
41. He is apparently drawing on a source in which the judgment was described in more detail (as in Second Peter 2).
42. “This condemnation” refers to both the eschatological wrath that will eliminate these types from the earth during the Tribulation and Second Advent, as well as their judgment for Ph1 unbelief.
43. These subtle intruders are described further.
44. They are “ungodly”, or profane, in terms of the true faith.
45. This term, as we have seen, refers to unbelievers (2Pet.3:7; cp. v.15).
46. Jude further identifies them as those “who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness”.
47. The big question here is: What aspect of grace is he referring to?
48. If it is saving grace, then this contradicts the allegation that they “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”.
49. These types are certainly not men who proclaimed the gospel of free grace (cp. 2Pet.2:1).
50. The grace Jude speaks of is the grace provided for under Divine Institution #2, which is Right Man/Right Woman, or marriage.
51. And specifically, that aspect of marriage called sex.
52. Marriage and sex are grace gifts given to the entire human race.
53. Sex is not only designed for the orderly perpetuation of the species, but also for recreation between a man and a woman within the context of marriage (cp. Prov.5:15-19).
54. Any thing else is a form of licentiousness.
55. The noun refers to sexual immorality and is used 10X in the N.T.: Mk.7:22; Rom.13:13; 2Cor.12:21; Gal.5:19; Eph.4:19; 1Pet.4:3; 2Pet.2:2,7,18; Jude.1:4.
56. The liberals, including the theological liberals, speak of sexual freedom, or liberation.
57. Many denominations and churches have embraced the liberal ethic of anything goes between consenting adults.
58. Only the true teaching of Scripture liberates people; this other enslaves them.
59. “A free people must understand what freedom is. And in our present situation the law must not be permitted to contribute to the widespread confusion of liberty with licentiousness. Liberty is not an abstract right to do whatever we feel like without regard to the consequences. It especially does not mean this in those areas where the consequence of abuse is to destroy liberty. If we want to hold on to liberty, then we must limit those abuses that will destroy it. We can’t have it both ways. This means that at some level, in the laws of a free society, limits must be set which respect the requirements of freedom.” -- Alan Keyes.
60. Freedom is abused by the liberals and the result is slavery (1Pet.2:16; 2Pet.2:19).
61. The false teachers arising in Jude’s day and dominating the landscape in our day are doctrinal heretics, as well.
62. They attack who and what Jesus Christ is.
63. They deny His deity, His work, and His resurrection.
64. The phrase is reminiscent of 2Pet.2:1 (more proof of dependency).

65. Further, the designation *despotes*, “Master”, in the N.T., always refers to God the Father, except in Second Peter and here.
66. “Only” (τὸν μόνον) is added here because, like the later Gnostics, they maintained that He was a mere man on whom the divine Spirit descended at His baptism, along with the idea that Jesus was one of a number of potential leaders of epoch proportions.
67. So they denied His deity and supreme lordship.
68. Those who deny the Son also deny the Father (this theme is featured in First John).