

Rescued to Rescue

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 November 2009

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Jude 17. But dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.

These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt. Snatch others from the fire and save them.

To others, show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without faults and with great joy.

To the only God, our Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.

[1:11] Amen. Well, the year is 1822. And Harriet Tubman was born a slave in Maryland.

And after suffering much abuse for 29 years in slavery, she fled to Philadelphia and to freedom there.

Having been rescued from slavery herself, she devoted the next 10 years of her life, helping hundreds of other American slaves to escape along that secret route to freedom that was known as the Underground Railroad.

At great risk to herself, she would lead small groups of slaves at night, from one safe house to the next meeting place, all along the route to their eventual freedom.

And so she's known to us in U.S. history as the most famous conductor along the Underground Railroad. The rescued became a rescuer.

[2:24] In 1977, Gianna Jessen's 17-year-old mother went to a Planned Parenthood clinic in Southern California, got counsel, and so she went there to have her baby aborted.

The mother's womb was injected with a fatal saline solution, which the baby takes in and then is burned on the inside and the outside.

And the purpose is that the mother will give birth to the dead baby within 24 hours. But miraculously, after 18 hours of being burned in her mother's womb, little two-pound Gianna was born alive in the abortion clinic.

If the abortionist had been there at the time, he was gone at the moment of her birth. If he had been there, he could have strangled her, he could have left her to die, and that would have been perfectly legal.

It's 1977. But he wasn't on duty, and a nurse called an ambulance, and Gianna's life was spared.

[3:34] Twenty-three years later, she stood before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and testified on behalf of the Born Alive Infants Protection Act, an act that President Bush later signed into law guaranteeing proper medical treatment for any children born alive.

And so in the battle for life, the lives of the unborn, she now spends much of her life speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Again, the rescued became the rescuer.

Now that's the heartbeat of our text this morning. That's the very center of what Jude has been inspired by the Spirit of Christ to tell us in verses 22 and 23.

The basic principle is this. Dear Christian, you have been rescued in order to rescue others.

Notice the text with me, verse 22. Be merciful to those who doubt. Snatch others from the fire and save them. And to others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

[5:03] Do you see his point? In this battle of the ages, the battle for the lives and souls of men, you dear Christians have been rescued in order to rescue others.

You've been snatched from the fire, verse 23, in order to snatch others from the fire. You've been saved, verse 23, in order to save others.

You've been shown mercy in order to be to show mercy to others in need of salvation. So we've come to that section here at the end of Jude's letter where our captain is giving us orders.

He's calling us to arms, remember. To the battle, he is saying. And he's urging us now to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

That's the section we're in. He's laying out the winning battle plans. He's giving us orders on how to contend for the faith. And there is an offensive as well as a defensive part to the master's plan.

[6:19] There is the offensive part and the defensive part. The defensive part is to keep ourselves from false teachers. We saw that last week.

The offensive part is to save others from false teaching. And that's our passage this morning. Both are necessary in the fight.

The defense came first, verses 17 through 21. We looked at it last week. Remember that the apostles of our Lord Jesus warned us about these false teachers who were coming.

So don't be surprised. Rather, be on your guard. Expect them. Expect to hear preaching. Expect to hear views about God that make it easier to sin.

In fact, expect to hear views of God's grace. That give people a license to sin. You were told that's going to happen. So expect it.

[7:19] Watch out. Prepare yourself. And then build yourselves up in your most holy faith by the intake of the word of God. Did you do that this week?

Did you suck in more and more of God's truth that you might not be swallowed alive by every wind of doctrine coming down the pike? Reading, hearing it preached, meditating, memorizing.

Get a grip on Bible doctrine and don't let go for anything if you would be kept from false teaching. And pray in the Holy Spirit. Pray in the Holy Spirit.

It's supernatural power and grace that we need. And keep yourselves in God's love by walking in his commandments. And wait for that mercy to be received.

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that will bring you to eternal life. That's defense. Build yourselves up. Keep yourselves. But now the offense.

[8:26] Rescue others. Rescue others. That is a sad excuse for a football team that has no offense. Only defense.

Well, they're real good at stopping the other team. But every time they get the ball, it's three and out. Three and out. Three and out. And that is a sad excuse for an army of Christ that has no offense.

Only defense. Keep ourselves from falling to false doctrine. Build ourselves up in the faith so that we don't get tricked by the lies that Satan is spreading through his ministers.

But that army never entering the enemy's territory with a search and rescue operation to find others who are deluded by that old deluder Satan we heard of in the Sunday school hour.

And to set them free. And to set them free. To rescue them. These captives. These slaves of sin. No. No. The orders from heaven.

[9:35] Are to take the offensive and to rescue those who are ensnared by false teaching. That's the point of our text then. The rescued are to be found rescuing.

And the rest of the message is just basically taking that principle and applying and illustrating it to our lives. Jude gets specific about how that is to be done.

This rescuing. We're not only told to rescue others, but we're actually given orders on how to do this. How to be a rescuer.

You see, not all needing to be rescued are the same. There are many differences. About them. And those differences can be great. And these differences require different treatment.

In the same way that you parents don't treat each of your children the same. In the way that you deal with them in discipline. Yes, you're to be consistent and you don't have favorites. But you know that just to look at one child is to melt them.

[10:42] When you must have harsher words with another to even get their attention. And so in dealing with people who need to be rescued from false teaching. There are these different ways that we are to rescue them from false teaching and error.

Remember that rescuer, Paul. He knew how to take the one remedy of the gospel and to apply it to Jew, to Gentile, to those under the law, to those without the law, to those strong, to the weak.

And he tells us how we are to or to adapt ourselves and our message wisely to the different character and situation of those that we speak to.

To the Jews, I became like a Jew to win the Jews. We would say to rescue the Jews here in Jude.

To the Gentiles, those not under the law, I became like them to win them.

And so on. And so that I have become all things to all men. So that by all possible means, I might save some. It seems that that's the sort of concern that Jude has here for how it is that we are to rescue these different needy people that we meet.

[12:05] That we're thinking here of three different kinds of people that receive specific instructions on how to rescue them. First of all, in verse 22, be merciful to those who doubt.

Merciful to those who doubt. Mercy has been a key word in the book of Jude. We saw it in verse two. We have received mercy. What are we waiting for when Jesus got?

We're waiting for mercy to bring us to eternal life. We have received mercy and now we are to be merciful to those who doubt. You see, many people are being affected by false teaching.

But in different ways and to different degrees. These here are described as those who are doubting. Perhaps not yet fallen into some serious error, but who nevertheless are exposed to them.

And are in a state of confusion and doubt. Beginning to doubt the truths of the Bible. Hesitating.

They used to be sure.

[13:09] They used to say, I believe this. I believe that. And now there's doubt and hesitation.

They're beginning to waver. That's the word here that's used in James 1, 6 about those who are wavering like a wave of the sea.

Now they're looking at things and saying, well, I used to think that meant this. But now I've heard this. Maybe I've just been sheltered all my life. And maybe this new interpretation of the verses is really true.

And now they're wavering. Maybe it's through a book they read. Maybe Christian TV. So-called program. Literature. A friend.

Words are example of other professing Christians. And it's all created confusion now. They're not quite sure about some fundamental truth. Folks, that's the beginning of going astray.

Doubt is the beginning. It's the first step. One of the early steps of apostasy is to doubt the truth.

Isn't that where the devil started? Planting that seed of doubt. Has God really said?

[14:20] Eve starts to doubt. All right? Is that really what it means? Is that really what the Bible says? Is telling the truth really that important?

Does the Bible really condemn homosexuality? And all sex outside of marriage? Does it really? Does God really know the future?

Is Jesus really the only way? Is repentance really needed for salvation? Maybe I really can have Christ in my sin after all.

I've heard preachers tell me that. And they start to doubt. And now they're wavering. And now they're wondering. Maybe they're just beginning to flirt with false ideas of truth and of practice.

What are we to do when we see that happening? Well. It's pretty obvious. But we're to notice them. And we're to move toward them.

[15:26] With mercy. And seek to recall them with the truth. We've got to take enough interest and know each other well enough that if someone starts to doubt the truth, we know to move in with mercy.

It's another one of those one anothering aspects. And Jude is good at pressing that upon us. Do you notice people who are starting to doubt?

Sometimes it's in great trials. Great discouragement. Long battles. And people start to doubt.

Things as fundamental as God's love. God's justice.

Read the book of Job. If you don't think that a righteous man can start to doubt. Read about John the Baptist in prison. If you don't think righteous people can doubt.

But on the other hand, maybe it's in time of great success and prosperity. And people begin to doubt whether the law really applies to them.

[16:28] And they think they can live above God's moral law. Doubt. And what are we to do with them? We're to be merciful to those who doubt.

We're to pity them. To have compassion on them. Now, if we compare this treatment to the one to follow, this one's a bit more gentle than the one to follow.

We're going to come up on snatch. There's not a lot of gentleness in snatching something, is there? But we're coming there. There's some that need to be snatched. But this one is in contrast to that. Be merciful, pitiful, compassionate, tender, gentle toward those who doubt. Come alongside of them gently with the truth.

And seek to convince them of the truth. I don't know that this is an exact illustration of the point. But you remember Priscilla and Aquila, those tent makers in Ephesus.

[17 : 31] Dear Christian people. Precious fellow workers with the Apostle Paul. And they were there in the synagogue at Ephesus one day. And a fiery evangelist, Apollos, comes to town.

Boy, can he preach. He's mighty in the scriptures and he's bold. And he can prove from the scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. And he can prove the proclamation of the gospel from the Old Testament scriptures.

And he came into the synagogue that day and he begins to preach. Oh, he's a gifted speaker and a gifted preacher. And I can just see Priscilla and Aquila as they sat there and they heard.

And they looked across at each other with a bit of a wrinkled forehead. And after the service, they got together and said, What did you think of that? Well, you know, it wasn't that he said anything wrong.

But he left part of the message out, didn't he? Yeah, that's the way I felt too. Why don't we have him over for lunch? And so Aquila invites him over for lunch, perhaps to spend the night there.

[18 : 48] They often opened their home to the saints. They were known for that. And the Bible tells us that they explained to him the way of God more perfectly.

That's a gentle approach. They went to him. They didn't beat him over the head with a Bible. They said, Brother, what you said was right.

But there's more to be said. And they shared it with him gently. And he received it. He took it on board. And he went off to the next place. The better for it.

Now, granted, he maybe wasn't doubting and slipping from a truth previously known. But it's the approach, folks. When you see someone starting to doubt, move to them with mercy and pity and compassion and seek to bring them back.

Remember, it was mercy that found us. When we were believing some damning lie of the devil. Every one of us. And mercy found us.

[19 : 56] Be merciful to those who doubt. But not all are in this condition of doubt. There are those. And people don't stay in that condition forever.

And so we come to the second group. Snatch others. You see, here's one group. But here's others. They're different. Snatch others from the fire and save them.

These are no longer hesitating. They've already taken the plunge into the false teaching that they were considering. They've already given up the truth.

They've sold it and they've bought a lie. They've taken the bait of the false teachers. And followed their own evil desires. And folks, these aren't rare birds that you see once in a lifetime.

They're all over. You bump into them every day. You relate it to some. People who are believing a lie. You see, if you're not following the Lord Jesus, you're holding to some lie of the devil.

[20 : 59] Right now as you sit here. You say, I'm orthodox. I'm 1689. If you're not following Christ. You are hanging on to a lie in your right hand and you don't even know it.

We meet a lot of these folks. This is not a little bit of truth for a rare occasion. Folks, this is how do I deal with people who are have been led astray by some false idea about what to believe or how to live.

Maybe it's those who are trusting in their own works righteousness. You go into heaven. And everything that they say.

Oh, sure. I go to the first so-and-so church and I teach Sunday school and I was baptized. I'm a member there. And I try to treat my neighbor like I treat myself.

And I try to keep the golden rule. And you realize that they're resting their soul not on what Jesus has done for sinners, but on what they have done. That's a damning error.

[22 : 07] And I would venture to say that you all are rubbing elbows with many, many, many people who are still holding on and leaning on something they do rather than abandoning all hope but Christ.

How do you deal with them? There are others who live for themselves but promise themselves heaven in the end. My God, my Jesus, they tell us, is so loving that he would never damn anyone to

hell, eternal hell.

That does not fit. My God. As I see him in the Bible, there can't be eternal punishments with a God of love.

Others believe that everyone will get a second chance after death. So there's no urgency to repent and believe right now. Because we all get a second chance, second time around.

Others firmly believe that they're saved because one time long ago they went forward and prayed a prayer. And asked Jesus to come into their life. And as you ask them about the reality of Christ, they don't know Jesus.

[23 : 16] They don't have a new heart that loves him, his people, his word, his day, his laws, his gospel, his coming. No, they're all about themselves and this world.

But don't you question their salvation? I took care of that business 50 years ago. These are damning delusions that as long as people hold to them, they are under condemnation and heading for condemnation.

It's the way that seems right to them. But in the end, it leads to destruction. They're no longer doubting and confused. They're convinced by error.

And that makes them a tougher group to deal with. The guy that's doubting. He's got questions. And if you've got answers from the Bible, maybe he'll listen. This is the convinced group.

And it's harder. They've got their Bible verses. They've got their arguments all in a row. And it makes me uncomfortable to deal with these.

[24 : 19] But notice we're still not at liberty to write them off as casualties in the battle to ignore them. Rather, the word of God comes to snatch them from the fire and save them.

Snatch them from the fire and they're lost. They're already perishing. Rescue them. Because if we don't get them out of the fire soon.

They will be lost forever. Folks, that's the nature of being in fire, isn't it? You don't have a lot of time when a guy is in fire. So snatch him out of the fire.

The very action is something more bold, more forceful, more determined. It's a condition that calls for a more aggressive, positive, direct dealing with these people.

They're in fire. They need to be snatched from it. We're called then to do the work of spiritual firemen. Snatching others from the fire.

[25 : 21] So it's the dead of night and there's a house on fire and there's people inside. And the fireman is driving by outside and he stops. And there he is outside this house.

He doesn't gently knock on the door. And call, danger within. Danger within. No, he busts the door down. And he goes in uninvited.

And he goes right up into the very privacy of a bedroom. And lays hold of a sleeping person in his arms. And carries him or her out of the house to safety.

There's an aggressive aspect to his manner, isn't there, that is warranted by the severe condition of the situation. They're in fire.

They're in fire and they'll perish if they're not. If they don't get out quickly. If they don't get out quickly. So he snatches them from the flames. Now, such behavior in other conditions would be inexcusable.

[26 : 24] But in the situation, the fireman's bold, aggressive, desperate actions are not only excusable, they're expected. It would be a delinquency of his duty to act in any other way.

Snatch others from the fire and save them. I want to blaze in that picture upon your minds this morning, believers. You're called to be spiritual firemen, to snatch them from the fire and save them.

Remind the phrase reminds us of the seriousness of the battle we're engaged in. Fire. What's the fire? Jude's talking about here. Do we have any idea?

What is this fire that Jude speaks of? Well, in verse seven, he talked about the punishment of eternal fire, didn't he? He's probably still talking about that.

The punishment of eternal fire, the fire of God's holy wrath against sin that is reserved and is coming for the false teachers and all who follow them and believe what they believe and live like they live.

[27 : 35] The torments of hell forever. Oh, but people don't believe in hell anymore. Yes, that's right. They bought into one of those lies of the devil. False teaching.

And we sometimes give them reason to think that there's no real hell. Don't we? By not warning those who are heading there who are already as good as in the fire.

If we really believed in hell, would we not be warning more people? Remember the missionary who showed up in a foreign land and the people here heard the gospel for the first day of their day for the first time in their lives of their danger of suffering eternal torments under this holy God.

But that God sent his son who, as a substitute for sinners, is now offering his blood and righteousness to everyone who repents and believes. And they did.

But then they had a hard question for the missionary. If all of this is true, as you say it is. And we believe it is. Why did you wait so long to come and tell us?

[28:45] We had brothers and sisters. We had moms and dads and grandpas and grandmas who never heard this story. And you see, our very reticence to warn people of hell just helps forward the lie that there is no hell.

Yes, we snatch them from the fire because there is coming a fire of hell. And in the light of this coming judgment, shall we not do something more aggressive, something more bold than to silently stand by and watch them go on the way that leads to destruction?

Let's get radical. Let's really get radical and do something aggressive enough to go to them in love. And to warn them that their behavior and doctrine leads to an eternal place of torment.

But that Jesus Christ welcomes them in mercy to forgive them all their sins. That is radical. Surely that would at least cause them to go away from us knowing that somebody still believes in hell anyway.

At least that much would be lodged in their hearts and minds. Brothers and sisters, you are the firemen. You are the firewomen. Driving past the burning house at night.

[30:11] What will you do? No, what are you doing? That's the reality you're all living in. What are you doing as you pass the one perishing in the fire?

Is there someone in danger of hellfire that you can pray for every day? Is there someone in danger of hellfire that you could draw near to with words of warning and words of life?

Remember how the book of James ended? My brothers, if one of you should wonder from the truth. That's what happens after people have doubted and then have gone out after error.

If one of you should wonder from the truth and someone should bring him back. Remember this.

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

So get in their way, folks. Get in their way. Get in their way with a track, with an invitation to church. Plant yourself at least in the way they're going to hell and say, you've got to go over me or around me, but you're not going to get to hell unwarned.

[31:28] We're seeking to snatch them from the fire. Now, to someone who doesn't believe in hell or the true gospel, your action will seem a bit odd.

Yes, you will probably have to take on yourself what all the apostles had to take on in the charge of fool for Jesus' sake. And that's exactly what he calls every disciple who's going to follow him.

If you don't want to be counted a fool for me, then don't even bother following me. You've got to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. And that means you've got to die to your desire to be thought cool by a world that's going to hell.

And so you're you're life saving. Your life saving mission will seem to them as a firefighting bus firefighter busting into their house when there's no fire inside because they don't see the fire.

Hell, I don't see it. I don't smell it. I can't touch it. I can't hear the cries of the damned. You're a fool to come in here and warn me about fire.

[32:36] But I'll tell you, there's coming a day. When what you did will not seem so out of touch with reality, it's the day of judgment. And from that judgment seat, all mankind go two ways, one into the eternal presence of Christ in heaven and the others into hell.

And when hell fire is in view, what you did back in life to warn that person will not only seem the most reasonable thing that you could have done, but it will also be seen to be the most loving thing that you could have ever done.

Snatch them from the fire. Because fire is where they're headed if they just continue on in the way that seems right for them.

Jesus calls us to contend for the faith by snatching others from the fire and saving them. And we save them by turning them away from the error of their way, turning them back to the truth of the

gospel, calling them to the only savior of sinners.

In faith and repentance. So what more can you be doing this week, brothers and sisters, to rescue the perishing, to snatch them from the fire?

[33:54] The third treatment for those to be rescued. To others show mercy. Verse 23. Mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Mercies all the way through here. It's not mentioned in the second one, but folks, there is nothing more merciful than being snatched from the fire.

Isn't that what we just saying? But oh my God, it found out me. What did? Mercy did. It is a merciful thing to be saved from our ideas about God, about sin, about my life, about everything.

Eternity, about the world, about Christ, and to be brought into saving relationship with Jesus. So though it's not mentioned in the second one, it's mentioned in the first and then the third.

Mercy, mercy, mercy. And I believe it's implied in the second. To be snatched as mercy. You remember Lot? He was down there in Sodom with his family of four. And fire and brimstone was coming.

[35:02] And two angels sent to warn them. And Lot hesitated. So much so that the angels had to physically lay hands on them and snatch them out of Sodom.

Lot, his wife, in one angel's hands, out of Sodom. His daughters, in the other angel's hands, out of Sodom. That was a snatch. And you know what the text says?

The Lord had mercy on him. Mercy. Yes, even that second category is mercy. It's not stated, but to be snatched from fire is mercy. And now the third.

To others show mercy. Mixed with fear. There's a new element here. You put into the brew fear. Some were to call with gentle mercy.

Some with more aggressive mercy. But some with mercy mixed with fear. Now fear for whom? The commentaries ask. Fear for whom?

[36:08] Well, fear for the deceived person. We fear for them. Don't we? They don't know enough. They're deceived. They're blind. They can't see their danger.

They don't know it. The God of this age has blinded the eyes of those who cannot. Who do not believe the gospel. So that they can't see the glory of God in the face of Christ. They can't see hell. They can't see the judgment. And so they don't tremble. Well, we're to tremble for them. We show them mercy mixed with fear.

We're scared to death for people, aren't we? For people in our lives, we tremble for them. They're walking on the edge of hell and don't know it.

And so it's with mercy mixed with fear that we go after these who are following some error. But there's also a healthy fear for ourselves.

[37:05] Not just for them, but for ourselves. If you are going to snatch others from the fire, you're going to have to get close enough to the fire that you also could be burned. On September 11, 2001, New York City firemen showed the world how dangerous it can be to rescue others from a burning building, a building on fire.

I remember taking a Red Cross life-saving instruction many, many years ago. And I still remember the warning of the dangers of saving a drowning man.

And panic and fear. They can just grab on to you and the two of you go down to the bottom together. Well, that's no reason not to rescue them, but it's a reason to be careful.

That's what we were told. No, rescue them. But here's the maneuvers. Watch out. It's dangerous. And that's the point that Jude is making here.

Rescuing others is often dangerous business. Move to them with mercy mixed with fear. Hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

[38:25] Great care, proper fear are needed lest in coming alongside of to help someone else who is in the fire. You yourself should become defiled.

You're not above this Christian. The strongest Christian is not above this. Not a few have set out to rescue the polluted, only to be polluted themselves in the process.

They began trying to pull out of some pit of a devil's lie. Somebody else only to fall into the pit themselves. And, by the way, what was one of the key marks in that profile of a false teacher? What's one of the key marks of this false teaching that Jude is talking about? Sexual immorality. Remember that? Sexual immorality often attaches to false belief.

We believe certain things about God that give us liberties in this arena. And so they turn the grace of God into a license for what?

[39:36] For immorality. Verse 8, these dreamers pollute their own bodies. Verse 16, they follow their own evil desires. Verse 19, they follow mere natural instincts.

So any rescue attempts for such people needs to proceed with caution, with fear and trembling, and with a hatred of that sin.

A healthy fear of contagion. Sin and error are very contagious. Sin and error are very contagious.

Did you know that there is inside of the rescuer a very part of the rescuer that loves the thing out of which he's trying to rescue another?

Here's a person. He's sunk in some lie of Satan. And that very lie finds inside of the rescuer's heart something that likes that.

Oh, mix your mercy with fear when you go out after that one. There's something in the intellectual arguments of error that is flattering to your flesh.

[40:56] Natural wisdom is so flattering to the flesh. And so we go to help someone out of their error, only to find ourselves sucked in to some worldly wisdom that leads us away from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Christ.

It calls for fear and for hatred of even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. Commentaries are at a loss as to what the picture is here that Jude is going after.

Or is it the pollution in the Old Testament law that when someone died, the very clothing of the dead, if you touch that clothing, you became unclean, unfit to go into the presence of God until you went through washings and waitings and all the rest.

Is it that defilement, the clothing of the dead person or certain plagues? The clothing of the person struck with the plague is still contagious and contaminates others.

So what do you do with that clothing? Well, you don't just get real chummy with it, do you? You're very wary and fearful and you hate the garment. You hate the clothing that is stained by corrupted flesh.

[42:06] You take every precaution against touching anything that would pull you down. You avoid anything that leads to overexposure to their...

You don't need to know everything that the pornographer is looking at. The man you're seeking to rescue. You don't need to know all the details about that sister that you're seeking to pull out of some pit.

Be careful. Oh, go into those situations with accountability to others, with prayer and fasting and aware of your own propensity to fall.

Isn't that what Galatians 6.1 points us to? Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, folks, sin can be wrong doctrine or wrong practice. And if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

There goes our spiritual fireman into the fire to restore the one fallen. But watch yourself or you also may be tempted. Saul, Paul himself knew that tug in his heart, even as he's seeking to pull someone else out of the pit.

[43:14] And so with some show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the garment stained by corrupted flesh. Jesus said of his church in Sardis, You have a few people, a few people in Sardis who have not sold, soiled their clothes.

They will walk with me dressed in white for they are worthy. He who overcomes will like them be dressed in white. What a sad picture the rest of the church had soiled their garments.

And you read the letters to those seven churches and the soiling of their garments in many of those churches was that of corrupted sexual immorality.

Hating even the garments, the clothing soiled. Now, that's not reason to retreat. There's dangers in trying to rescue people. It's not reason to withdraw and just to take a defensive posture.

See, I've got to keep myself from falling. Think of the greatest rescuer ever, Jesus Christ. When he faced danger, didn't say, oh, it's too dangerous.

[44:26] I'll stay here in heaven. But rather marched into hell to snatch us from the fire. In order to snatch you, brothers and sisters, Jesus had to go into hell on Calvary.

He had to suffer our hell on Calvary, didn't he? In order to snatch us from the fire. He felt the fires of God's wrath on Calvary in order to save us so that we never have to feel the fires of hell.

So, yes, there's dangers. Not reason for withdrawal, retreat. No, we need to have this offensive. It's this commander who marched into the jaws of hell to snatch us from it that says to us, Okay, you build yourselves up.

You keep yourselves in God's love. But you also rescue others in mercy. And we're going to see it next week. He promises to keep us from falling.

Oh, what a precious promise that will be in verse 24 when we see it in context. We're afraid of falling in the pit as we help someone. Now to him who is able to keep you from falling.

[45 : 33] There is one who can keep you. And so on, we'll see, from the benediction. Oh, it's worth it. The work is worth it. Rescuing others.

There was that great Saul of Tarsus, if ever. There was a man who was under the power of false teaching. False doctrine. It was Saul of Tarsus. Pharisee of the Pharisees.

He took the lie of the Pharisees hook, line, and sinker. He took it further than many of his teachers took it. Jesus said of the Pharisees that when they make a disciple, they make him two times more a child of hell than they themselves are.

That was Saul of Tarsus. A two times more child of hell than his very instructors. He had so bought into the lie of false teaching that he thought he was serving God when he was shedding the blood of Christians.

That's deceived. That's already in the fire. But then he heard Stephen preaching about Jesus.

[46 : 39] And then he was on his way to Damascus to persecute some more in his service to God. Just as you're serving God by being here this morning, he thought he was on his way to a worship service, to serve God in Damascus by roughing up some more of those crazy followers of that false Messiah, Jesus.

Oh, God will be pleased with me tonight. And Jesus himself met him with mercy and snatched him from the fire. And what did he do? Snatched from the fire. What does a soul do that's just been snatched from fire?

He looks to others who are still in the fire and says, Lord, Lord, use me. What would you have me to do? And God called him right there on that road to go and to turn people from the power of Satan to the power of God.

From darkness to light. The once rescued man immediately set out to rescue others. C.T. Studd was born in a wealthy but unconverted family in England.

And he received the best education. He became a championship cricket player. At Cambridge University. With national fame. He trusted in Christ to save him at age 18.

[47 : 53] When his brother became seriously ill. C.T. was haunted with the searching question. What is all the fame and flattery worth? When a man comes to eternity.

I knew that cricket would not last. I knew that honor would not last. And nothing in this world would last. But it was worthwhile living for the world to come.

So he gave himself up to the Lord. And started seeking to rescue others. He says, I began to try and persuade my friends to read the gospel. And to speak to them individually about their souls. I cannot tell you what joy it gave me to bring the first soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have tasted almost all the pleasures that this world can give. But those pleasures were as nothing compared to the joy that saving of one soul gave me.

When his father died, he left him a huge inheritance. He gave it all away. He walked away from his promising career in cricket. And he signed up with a China Inland Mission under Hudson Taylor to be a missionary.

[49 : 05] And he said, Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell. And he took his rescue shop.

First to China. Then to India. And then to the Congo of Africa. Where he finally died. Died in his rescue shop.

A yard from hell. At the age of 71. He'd been rescued. Rescued from what, John?

From false ideas. About life. And God. The world to come. What's worth giving your life to?

He had been rescued from the worship of this vain world's golden store. And he became a rescuer of others. Who were still the deceived slaves of sin. Still worshipping the created thing rather than the creator.

[50 : 03] And brothers and sisters, that's what we're called to in this battle of the ages. You've been rescued. You go and rescue others. Some. Show mercy to those who doubt.

