

Title: **You Can't Finish What You Never Started**
Passage: **Jude 1b-2**
Theme: **Foundational themes**
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{Read Passage}

[I] Incredible Journey

NBC news reported a few years ago that a dog, who went missing for 5 years, found his way home. Impressive as that is, what makes the story all the more remarkable is that, in t/space of those 5 yrs., this dog's owner married, had a family & moved to 4 different locations.

Lots of stories like that. We've heard them. Dog is lost in Yellowstone park. Mos. later arrives home 2 or 3 states away.

Theme that inspired t/1963 Disney Movie, "The Incredible Journey."

Most pets don't live to see such excitement. For them, life isn't much of a journey.

Not so for t/Xn. "The Incredible Journey" could serve as title for ea. of our lives.

For the true believer it's a journey that was marked out in eternity past, in t/wise counsel of God.

God's decreed to create you. Then,

He brought you forth into this world.

But you were a lost sheep – until t/Shepherd of your soul found you.

That's when t/real journey begins. Incredible Journey that is t/Xn life.

We've noted that this journey isn't a straight line. We don't fly over t/landscape from point A to Point B.

Xn life is a journey to the celestial city across the Jordan.

Detours, Switchbacks, Narrow Paths, Dangerous Cliffs, Murky Swamps filled w/despair.

We have a map (WOG) // Light (Work of t/Spirit) // Friends who guide us (CH).

Warning Signs posted along the way – “Don't neglect so great a salvation” / “Don't leave your first love” / “Make Your calling and election sure” / “Walk by the Spirit not by the flesh”

Dangerous Exit Signs put up by the enemy.

Exit here to Disbelief; Exit here to False Religion; Exit here to Indifference; Exit here to Damning Doctrine

We're not to leave t/road. We're not to exit.

But some do; many do. At different points of their journey.

We call these apostates. Defectors who claimed allegiance to our general but have left to put on t/uniform of t/enemy.

Perseverance is so essential.

But you can't persevere in a race you were never in.

“Rosie Ruiz”

RR was a Cuban American declared the winner in the female category for the 84th Boston Marathon in 1980. She later had her title stripped after it was discovered that she had not run the entire course.

She allegedly emerged out of a crowd of spectators on Commonwealth Avenue, half a mile from the finish.

You Can't Finish What You Never Started

Brings us back to Jude.

Jude is all about those who didn't finish t/race. False teachers; heretics; apostates; enemies within t/CH attempting to run a race alongside of us – a race they never legitimately started. That's who Jude wrote about. Not who he wrote to.

He wrote about these disqualified runners – that's t/bulk of t/letter.

He writes of ==>

certain persons [who] have crept [into the church] unnoticed . . . ungodly persons who turn the grace of . . . God into licentiousness and [who] deny [the] only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (v. 4)

Look at how he describes them (“these” and “these men”) ==>

V. 8 . . . these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.

V. 10 . . . these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

VV. 12-13 12 These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves;

clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

V. 16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

He writes about t/disqualified. Yes.

But he writes to t/qualified – those who have legitimately started t/race & who will, by God's grace, finish it.

Middle part of the letter, vv. 4-23, could be a downer. It's not easy to “contend earnestly for the faith” as we're exhorted to do in v. 3.

That middle part of t/letter is book-ended by tremendous words of encouragement. IOW – Jude begins and ends his letter on a high note.

As Daniel Wallace observes:

Jude opens his letter by greeting his audience with three indicatives of the faith: they have been “called,” “loved,” and “kept.” This word of perseverance sets the tone for the whole epistle and concludes it as well.

We're looking at vv. 1-2. If u look closely at these 2 vv. you'll notice that they feature 2 sets of 3 (=6). Six themes, 3 in v. 1 & 3 in v. 2.

1: called, loved, kept.

2: mercy, peace, love.

This is t/start of t/race as far as Jude is concerned.

We might call it ==>

I. The Obstacle Course Which is the Christian Life (v. 1)

Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

That's about as far as we got last week.

Author: Jude (Heb. "Judah" / Gk. "Judas"). Same name as "Judas Iscariot."

Isn't it interesting that a book written on apostasy bears the same name as the all-time apostate?

Writer's name is Judas – a name w/more stigma attached to it than Benedict Arnold. Judas has to run 2d only to "Lucifer" as far as cursed names are concerned. Do you know anybody named Judas?

God in His great grace, chose a man who has the same name to write a letter on apostasy illustrated by the greatest apostate of all time, Judas.

We noted last time that this Jude / Judas was t/Lord's half-brother, t/natural son of Joseph and Mary, along with James, his brother (notes that here).

Galatians 1:19, Paul says, "I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother."

James => led t/Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

James wrote t/book by that name.

Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

Uses t/word δουλος (slave), not διακονος (servant). In humility Jude doesn't emphasize fraternal privilege of a brother, but a servant's submission to a Master. Cf. James 1:1 (J. a δουλος of God).

OT concept – those called to serve t/Lord were known as His slaves, men such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David.

In the NT the same can be said of those like Paul, Peter, James, Jude – all men who referred to themselves as Christ's slaves.

True of every believer.

1 Corinthians 7 ==>

20 Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called [called to salv.] 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. 22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

Romans 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Jude

a slave of JC writes to fellow slaves of JC.

to those who have been called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

3 participles: 1) Called; 2) Loved; 3) Kept.

I. The Obstacle Course Which is the Christian Life (v. 1)

A. The Starting Line: Your Call to Run (called)

Can't finish a race you've not started, so Jude writes ==>

to those who have been called

– to those who are truly in t/race.

1. This is the doctrine of effectual calling

a. See frequently in the NT

ROM 1:6-7 [Paul writes to those Xns whom he refers to as] . . . the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called {as} saints . . .

1CO 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1CO 1:23-24 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1TH 2:12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2TH 2:14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2TI 1:9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

1PE 2:9 But you are \a chosen race, a\ royal \priesthood, a holy nation, a people for\ {God's}\ own possession,\ that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His

marvelous light:

English readers, when asked to define the word 'called,' might give the definition 'invited.' Such a definition would misunderstand radically what Jude intended. The term 'called' does not merely mean that God invited believers to be his own. Those whom God calls are powerfully and inevitably brought to faith in Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel. The call of God is extended only to some and is always successful, so that all those who are called become believers. [Schreiner, 429]

God's calling is effectual (irresistible).

Calling can't be divorced from Choosing.

2 Peter 1:10 **Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you . . .**

Calling = Irresistible grace;

Choosing, Unconditional election.

REV 17:14 [Those who are with the Lamb, t/Lord of lords and King of kings] **are the called and chosen . . .**

John 6:37, 44

37 “All that the Father gives Me (election) shall come to Me (calling), and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out (perseverance).

44 “No one can come to Me (in salvation), unless the Father who sent Me draws him (calling/irresistible grace); and I will raise him up on the last day (perseverance).

b. Context

Tremendous encouragement for those who are being engulfed in false teaching / apostasy. God knows those how are truly His. He will keep them.

Speaking of Judas, we see that with Jesus words in John 13:18. After washing t/feet of t/disciples, giving them that example of selfless service,

. . . I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’

I. The Obstacle Course Which is the Christian Life (v. 1)

A. The Starting Line: Your Call to Run (called)

B. The Motivation: God's Unfailing Love (loved)

Jude writes to those who are
beloved in God the Father

1. This is the only place in the NT where you will find this phrase
“beloved in God the Father”

Textual variant in KJV the difference between 2 words *ηγαπημενοις* “beloved” & *ηγιασμενοις* “sanctified” (“to them that are sanctified by God the Father”).

2. Beloved = Covenant fellowship with the Triune God

a. God has set His special love upon you

Why? Beats me?! (Rom. 5:8).

John 17:26 (v. 20 = Jesus prayed not only for the disciples who were with Him in the Upper Room but for every believer t/o the ages).

“... I have made your name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith you loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Jesus' prayer that we would fellowship in that co-eternal love which the Father and the Son have shared from before the beginning of time.

b. A great hymn with a bit of a storied history: “The Love of God”

Apparently, t/3d stanza was found scribbled on t/wall of an insane asylum in CA. That 3d stanza has its origins, however, in a Jewish poem written in Germany around the 11th c.

Frederick Lehman added t/first 2 stanzas and the chorus sometime around 1917.

He wrote in 1947 ==>

“One day, during short intervals of inattention to our work [difficult time of hard labor in CA], we picked up a scrap of paper and, seated upon an empty lemon box pushed against the wall, with a stub pencil, added the (first) two stanzas and chorus of the song.”

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell.
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.

The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled

And pardoned from his sin.

Chorus: O love of God, how rich and pure!

How measureless and strong!

It shall forevermore endure

The saints' and angels' song.

When hoary time shall pass away,

And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall;

When men who here refuse to pray,

On rocks and hills and mountains call;

God's love, so sure, shall still endure,

All measureless and strong;

Redeeming grace to Adam's race—

The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,

And were the skies of parchment made;

Were every stalk on earth a quill,

And every man a scribe by trade;

To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry;

Nor could the scroll contain the whole,

Though stretched from sky to sky.

Romans 5:5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus

our Lord.

Jude 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

I. The Obstacle Course Which is the Christian Life (v. 1)

A. The Starting Line: Your Call to Run (called)

B. The Motivation: God's Unfailing Love (loved)

C. The Prize: Christ's Ultimate Possession (kept)

Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who have been called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

1. Phrase “kept for Jesus Christ” could be translated “kept by Jesus Christ” (Dative which could indicate agency “by” or advantage “for”) I lean toward the translation “kept for Jesus Christ” (both ideas may be present).

a. This is a statement of security

Those who begin t/race will finish it.

If you don't finish it, it's because you never really were in it.

Ephesians 1:13–14 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

(1) This is when the 'already but not yet' becomes finalized

1 Peter 1:4–5 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Golden chain of redemption in Romans 8:28-30 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

b. Keep in mind the context

Jude is about to launch into a terrifying tirade against false, damning doctrine – those who teach it and those who receive it. He even goes so far as to say, “save whom you can, as if snatching them from the fire” (v. 23).

Easy to think that this is all a crap shoot.

I have to keep myself saved and it's anyone's guess if I will finish the course.

No! If God sov. authored your salvation it's not up to chance. He will keep you. We see that here and at the end of t/letter (cf. vv. 24-25).

As if that weren't enough ==>

II. Verse 2: The Fuel to Run (and Finish) the Course (v. 2)

Second couplet of 3 – poetic balance to v. 1's “called, loved, kept”

Mercy, Peace, Love.

2 John 3 (only other place where these 3 are found in same verse)
Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

II. Verse 2: The Fuel to Run (and Finish) the Course (v. 2)

A. Mercy

Grace is getting what you don't deserve and cannot earn. Mercy is not getting what you do deserve and cannot avoid in and of yourself.

Where there's mercy there's grace.

God's interest is to magnify the fullness of His glory by spilling over in mercy to us. Therefore the pursuit of our interest and our happiness is never above God, but always in God. John Piper

God's mercy moves Him on your behalf.

When a tear is wept by you, think not your Father does not behold; for, "Like as a father pities his children so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Your sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; your whisper can incline His ear unto you; your prayer can stay His hands; your faith can move His arm. Oh! Think not that God sits on high in an eternal slumber, taking no account of you. [C.H Spurgeon, The Sympathy of the Two Worlds, Sermon, Luke 15:10]

B. Peace

The word means much more than the absence of conflict. It's a wellness, a wholeness, that which encompasses t/Hebrew "shalom".

John MacArthur notes that ==>

[Peace] is the very essence of [God's] nature, one of His attributes. God is at all times at perfect peace, without any discord within Himself. He is never under stress, worried, anxious, fearful, unsure, or threatened. He is always perfectly calm, tranquil, and content. There are no surprises for His omniscience, no changes for His immutability, no threats to His sovereignty, no doubts to cloud His wisdom, no sin to stain His holiness. Even His wrath is clear, controlled, calm, and confident. [John MacArthur, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Moody, 2002, p. 313.]

God the Father is called the “God of peace” (Hebrews 13:20). God the Son, the “Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9:6). God the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit...of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

C. Love

May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

Romans 5:1–5 1 THEREFORE having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Jude is saying, “I know that t/CH is under attack. It's not easy to contend for t/faith. It may not be popular. But don't fear. You are called // loved // kept secure. You have a multiplicity (an endless supply) of

mercy, peace and love at your disposal.”

The Father has known you from t/beginning, He chose you to be His child, The Spirit has drawn you to His side, The Son died for you; He lives to keep you secure. The bond of love that covers you is as eternal as the bond that exists between the Father, Son, HS.

Mercy, Peace, Love
Called, Beloved, and Kept

In John Milton's classic “Paradise Lost” he writes first of the Great War before the world, when Heaven was a bloody battlefield and Satan flew with his minions in full-blown insurrection.

In Milton's text, God is on the throne, man and woman in the garden, and Satan in hurried flight. Milton writes of the Godhead speaking and in mutual love deciding to call and love and keep (mercy, peace, love).

On his right the radiant image of his glory sat.
His only son. On Earth he first beheld
Our two first parents, yet the only two
Of mankind, in the Happy Garden placed
He then surveyed Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there... .
Ready now to stoop, with wearied wings and willing feet... .
Him God beholding from his prospect high,
Wherein past, present, future, he behold,
Thus to His only son foreseeing spake: -
"Only-begotten son, seest thou what rage
Transports our Adversary . . he wings his way . .
Directly towards the new-created World,
And Man here placed, with purpose to assay
If him by force he can destroy, or, worse,

By some false guile pervert: and shall pervert;
For Man will hearken to his glozing lies,
And easily transgress the sole command. . . .

And then, contrasting the destiny of Satan and his demons with that of our own, Milton has the Father say:

The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-depraved; Man falls, deceived
By the other first: Man, therefore, shall find grace.
To which the Son resounds:
O Father, gracious was that word which closed
Thy Sovereign sentence, that Man should find grace. . . .
Happy for Man, so coming! He her aid
Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost -
Atonement for himself, or offering meet,
Indebted and undone, hath none to bring.
Behold me, then: me for him, life for life,
I offer; on me let thine anger fall;
Account me Man: . . . on me let Death wreak all his rage.
Under his gloomy power I shall not long lie vanquished. . . .
Then, with the multitude of my redeemed,
Shall enter Heaven, long absent, and return.
Father, to see Thy face, wherein no cloud
Of anger shall remain, but peace assured
And reconciliation: wrath shall be no more
Thenceforth, but in thy presence joy entire.

So ends the reading of Milton. What has been called “A literary window into the measureless glory of the gospel.” [David R. Helm, 289]