

Contending for the Faith

"Fight for Your Faith"

Jude 3-4

Introduction

Last week we began a series we're calling "Contending for the Faith" from the Book of Jude, which is the next to last book in the Bible. Jude's letter is only 25 words long but packed with profound insight and a call for purity in Christian doctrine.

Jude's original intention was to write about our common salvation. But that subject was put on hold by the Holy Spirit because of developing circumstances within the Church. The Holy Spirit inspires Jude to warn believers that false teachers have infiltrated the Church infecting it with false doctrine. Jude then urges the Church to "contend for the Faith once delivered to the saints."

Let's begin with verse 3, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation; I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3 NKJV)

Beloved means "dear friends who are very much loved." It is an endearing term of unconditional love imparted by the Holy Spirit. William Barclay puts Jude's words this way, "I felt that I was compelled to write a letter to urge you to engage in the struggle to defend the faith." Another writer puts it, "I felt constrained to write to you, beseeching you to contend with intensity and determination for the faith."

Jude is earnest about involving his readers and challenges them to commit to defending the Gospel of Jesus. He makes every effort to appeal and reach out to them to take the call to follow Christ seriously. There is a sense of urgency for the hearer to take action quickly. Why? Because verse 4 says that false teachers have crept into the Church to attack and corrupt the faith of believers. Like wolves, they are on the prowl for innocent lambs, so Jude warns the sheep to protect the innocent from falling prey to this deception. These false teachers are not innocent or misguided. They have a goal!

Jude uncloaks their mission. He says that false teachers subvert the Gospel privately. They pervert the grace of God and make it a license for immorality. They also reject the sovereignty of Jesus Christ and refuse to accept Him as God and Savior of the world. Strangely, these particular false teachers claimed to be Christians while practicing and promoting immorality.

The Faith Jude speaks of is the simple proclamation of the Gospel of Salvation and the moral teaching of Christ and the Apostles. He calls it the Faith was once for all delivered by God through the Apostles. It applies to every individual believer equally. The false teachers use the grace of God as an excuse to sin, and they substitute their own standards instead.

In 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul says that God inspired all Scripture. It is not open to change, revision, or addition by anyone. It is God's plan for every human and all of mankind. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Mat 24:35 NKJV)

However, Satan and his followers continually challenge God's Word, so we cannot take this Faith for granted. We must zealously guard and defend it. We must protect the purity of the Gospel message and submit to the sovereignty of Christ if we hope to gain eternal life. There is no negotiation on this matter.

The common salvation Jude speaks about is the salvation Jesus provided on the Cross that every believer everywhere shares in common. Because of the veiled and subversive nature of the attack on the believers, Jude feels a Holy Spirit compelled obligation to address and correct these subtle doctrinal errors of these false teachers.

I. False Teachers Subvert the Gospel Privately

The first thing Jude points out is that false teachers subvert the gospel privately.

In verse 4, Jude writes, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1:4 NKJV)

Jude is like the watchman on the wall mentioned in Ezekiel 3.

Ezekiel says, "At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their Sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their Sin; but you will have saved yourself. "Again, when a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before them, they will die. Since you did not warn them, they will die for their sin. The righteous things that person did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the righteous person not to sin and they do not sin, they will surely live because they took warning, and you will have saved yourself." (Eze 3:16-21 NIV)

The Bible reminds us that we are in a life and death spiritual battle. Every person must choose for themselves; eternal life or eternal death. Forever life with God or forever separation from God with Satan. We win this battle for the faith through prayer, mercy, and love, and by opposing the false teachers.

Sadly, in the name of tolerance, many believers today have ignored the false

teachings that have infiltrated the Church. John MacArthur points to the Church's lack of discernment and stresses the need for Christian leaders to return to biblical preaching. He says that whole churches have shifted their focus from the clear teachings of Scripture to the felt needs of sinners. They want to make church services "comfortable" and "Non-confrontational. As a result, their messages are theologically weak, and the people they serve are doctrinally naive and defenseless against error."

He lists six reasons for lack of discernment in the Church today: First, is the trend to minimize the importance of doctrine. There is a feeling that biblical clarity is divisive and unloving. To them, doctrine lacks humility and hinders unity. Secondly, the Church is less objective in its outlook. It substitutes the absolute truth of Scripture for moral relativism and postmodern subjectivity. Third, the Church has abandoned its commitment to the power of Scripture and the Holy Spirit and become preoccupied with its image. Fourth, there is a failure to study and interpret the Scriptures correctly. Many don't even read the Word, let alone study it! Fifth, there is no church discipline. The Church does not confront sin, heresy, or wickedness, leaving believers with no guidelines or parameters for scriptural Christian fellowship and unity. And finally, MacArthur says, the Church's lack of discernment is due to the rampant void of spiritual maturity within its ranks. You can read about these six things more fully in John MacArthur's sermon entitled, "Survival Strategy for Apostate Times."

Actually, defending the Faith and warning believers against false teaching is a sign of genuine love for the Church. Satan has been a thorn in the side of believers since the very beginning. He is the ultimate false teacher. His tactics have not changed! Jude says apostasy creeps in very subtly. Satan's mission is to subvert the Gospel message. The good news is that God loves you enough to rescue you from Satan and sin.

Satan told Adam and Eve, "God has brainwashed you! He just wants to keep you from experiencing the fullness of life! So many people have fallen for this false message, just like Adam and Eve. They have abandoned their faith in God and allowed the Serpent to ruin their lives too. The word Jude uses means to come in by stealth, to sneak in, making them hard to detect.

False teachers use the same words that Christians do, but they have entirely different definitions. A.W. Tozer writes, "So skilled is the error at imitating truth, that the two are constantly mistaken for each other. It takes a sharp eye to know which brother is Cain and which is Abel."

False teachers disguise themselves as enlightened purveyors of truth and consider themselves more knowledgeable than the unlearned and ignorant disciples who follow Jesus. The Apostle Paul writes, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan, disguises himself as an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:13-14)

The message of the false teacher is so pleasing it makes you want to believe it!

But as one writer said, "The worst forms of wickedness consist in perversions of the truth." So many times, Satan's false message comes through the voice of one who claims to be a friend, or a teacher, or someone else you allow to become close to you. For Adam, it came from the subtle voice of the serpent that he had named.

Don't fall for the message of those who subtly creep in to destroy your faith in Christ. Jude says, "Earnestly contend for the Faith!" Defending the Faith requires intense effort. Know your Bible, and as Peter says, "Always be ready to give an answer to the opposition."

II. False Teachers Pervert Grace into Immorality

False teachers also have a knack for perverting grace into a license to be immorality. They argue that enlightened Christians are exempt from having to observe God's moral laws because of grace. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul calls them "false brethren secretly brought in to spy out our liberty in Christ."

Satan is the master of deception. God created him as a most beautiful angel. But his pride got the best of him. And in rebellion, he attempted to overthrow God. Jesus said he was no match for God, and Satan was cast out of Heaven like a bolt of lightning. But in his sin-darkened heart, he later plotted to corrupt humanity through deceit and lies about God hoping to persuade people to join him in his rebellion against God.

The Devil is great at impersonating God. He disguises himself as an angel of light and inspires his false teachers to do the same. He knows that the eternal welfare of your soul depends on what you believe about Jesus. They are marked individuals.

Jude uses the term licentious. It refers to a lack of restraint and shameful excess. In Scripture, it is used almost exclusively of lewd sexual immorality. Licentious behavior today is the product of the sexual revolution of the sixties. There is a kind of sexual depravity and abandonment that characterizes a whole segment of our society. Some flaunt their sexual perversion as a badge of distinction. They practice no self-restraint; they respect no boundaries and have an insatiable desire for recognition and pleasure.

People with a healthy conscience will readily confess their sin or at least try to hide it. But the licentious are so lost to decency that they don't care who sees their sin. They live in the moment with no regard for the consequences of their behaviors. William Barclay writes, "They pervert the grace of God into an excuse for blatant immorality. It is not that they arrogantly and proudly flaunt it; it is simply that they can publicly do the most shameful things because they have ceased to care about decency at all."

They reason that if God's grace is wide enough to cover any sin, they can sin whenever and however much they want. Because the more they sinned, the greater the grace. Therefore why worry about sin at all? But Jude says these false

teachers pervert God's grace into a justification for sin. And he describes these apostates as ungodly, morally perverted, denying Christ, defiling the flesh, rebellious, ignorant about God, and having false visions. They are destructive by nature, grumblers, fault-finders, arrogant, using flattering words to deceive, mockers of God, causing division, lovers of this world, and are devoid of the Spirit of God.

The lesson here is, be moral, respect authority, and defend the Gospel, and you'll have no problem spotting those who pervert God's truth.

III. False Teachers reject the Sovereignty of Jesus

Finally, Jude says that apostates deny Jesus is God and the only way to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. How do they accomplish this? Paul tells Titus, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work." (Tit 1: 15-16 NKJV)

Apostates may say they know God, but their actions deny Him. Don't just listen to the words people say, watch their behaviors and reactions. Our behaviors always give us away! The Apostle Peter writes, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness, they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time, their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (2Pe 2: 1-3 NKJV)

Webster says that to deny implies a firm refusal to accept as true, to grant or concede, or to disavow the existence or claims of. The Jews repeatedly denied, repudiated, and disowned Jesus not only by their words but by their actions. Paul told Timothy that "evil men and impostors would grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*" (2Ti 3: 13-14 NKJV)

One writer says, "There is more than one way to deny Jesus Christ.

- You can deny him in the day of persecution.
- You can deny Him for the sake of convenience.
- You can deny Him by your life and conduct and
- You can deny Him by developing false ideas about Him.

Many today choose to deny the sovereignty of Christ and God over His creation. It is common practice in our universities these days to deny and ridicule the One who created us. Only a handful of teachers in public schools and colleges today acknowledge that God is the Creator and that He has absolute and unrestricted authority over his creation. Is it any wonder that so many young people today are

leaving the church behind and denying the very existence of God? Satan is stalking our young people and corrupting their faith in God just as he did Adam and Eve.

His tactics haven't changed. The only thing that has changed is the number of helpers he has! His false teachers and helpers have infiltrated every avenue of life! In these last days, we must remain vigilant and aggressive in our defense of the Faith. It is our duty and responsibility to rescue those who are in the hand of Satan, snatching them as if they were a brand from the burning fire!

Genuine believers must embrace and follow the core truths of Scripture. The Apostle John writes in 1 John 4, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (1Jn 4:1-3 NKJV)

Apostates understand the Gospel but depart from the truth of God to follow the ways of another god. The Apostle John describes them this way. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us." (1Jn 2:19 NKJV)

CONCLUSION

Jude urges us to contend earnestly for the Faith. He says, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jud 1:4 NKJV)

We are the body of Christ and, therefore, the light of God that shines into the darkness of this world. Darkness can never overcome the light! When you turn on the light of truth, those who love the darkness flee for cover.

Paul tells the Thessalonians to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught." (2 Thess. 2:15) He describes the saints as set-apart ones, sanctified and holy. Reading and practicing the Word of God sets us apart and delivers us from the ways of the world, the power of sin, the lust of the flesh, and the dominion of the devil.

Fight for your Faith! Believe in God and proclaim the Gospel. Receive and teach authentic grace and give God his rightful place of authority in your life. If you do, you'll never need to worry about being deceived by false teachers.