

Earnestly Contend for the Faith

Text: Jude 1:1-4

Introduction

1. Jude was a half-brother of Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:55-56) and the brother of James (also a half-brother of Christ) who wrote the Epistle of James and pastored the Jerusalem church. Jude initially rejected Christ along with his other siblings (John 7:1-8) but in time was soundly converted (likely after the resurrection).
2. Jude was one of the last Epistles to be written (A.D. 68). It is fitting that it contains such a strong trumpet blast of warning against false teachers. Jude is placed in the N.T. order just before the last Book of the Bible. So, this call to contend for the faith comes right as the inspired Revelation comes to its climax.
3. The Structure/Outline of the Book
 - A. Part 1 – Apostates Exposed (Vs. 1-19)
 - B. Part 2 – Believers Exhorted (Vs. 20-25)
4. The verses before us contain the heart of Jude's Epistle (his purpose/aim) and his first exposure of the false teachers.
5. Jude writes to the saints not only of his day but to all believers of the church age. His message is just as powerful and relevant in our day almost 2,000 years later as it was when it was originally written.

I. THE POSITION OF THE SAINTS (Vs. 1)

Jude writes to those who are partakers of a blessed position through salvation:

A. Sanctified by God the Father

1. The word 'sanctified' means to be set apart, made holy and is a description of every true believer. The words 'separation', 'holiness', 'saints' and 'sanctification all have the basic meaning of "set apart".
2. Illustration: The nation of Israel – "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine." Lev 20:26
3. Titus 2:14 "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
4. The word is in the perfect tense – a permanent, unchangeable fact. Highlights the truth of the believer's security. The assurance of your salvation is very necessary if you are going to be in the battle (See Eph. 6:17, 1 Thess. 5:8).

5. “by God the Father” – a Divine work done on our behalf by Almighty God

B. Preserved in Jesus Christ

1. The word ‘preserved’ means to be kept or guarded. It means to be watched over, to be kept safe from harm. Again, this word is in the perfect tense signifying a permanent, unchangeable fact.
2. “in Jesus Christ” – a Divine work done on our behalf
3. Hebrews 7:25 “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”
4. I. Peter 1:5 “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

C. Called of God

1. While we do not see the Spirit’s Title in the text, we certainly see his Agency.
2. He is the one who convicts men of their sin and draws them to Christ (Jn. 16:8-11); He is the Agent of the New Birth, regenerating the repentant sinner and making him alive in Christ.

II. THE PRAYER FOR THE SAINTS (Vs. 2)

In this verse, Jude desires the multiplication of three graces for his readers:

A. Mercy

1. Definition: “The outward manifestation of pity, kindness.” “The compassion that pities the needy and wretched and acts to meet their need.”
2. Note: The word ‘mercy’ also appears in the opening salutation of 1 & 2 Timothy and 2 John against the backdrop of false teaching.
3. Look at Vs. 22-23 – We need God to increase our compassion in order to snatch people from the flames.
4. Observe how Jude’s prayer wish for the multiplication of mercy in the lives of his readers is immediately followed by the call to contend for the faith. This is significant as so often the accusation levelled at those contending for the faith is that they are being uncaring, unloving and unmerciful.
5. In reality, it is compassion that drives biblical contending. The most compassionate thing you can do for someone is tell them the truth. In fact, mercy and truth are not opposed to one another. They go together! They are frequently paired in Psalms and Proverbs. See Psalm 25:10, 61:7, 85:10, 15, 89:14, Prov. 3:3, 14:22, 16:6, 20:28.
6. For example: Proverbs 16:6 “By **mercy and truth** iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil.”

B. Peace

There are two aspects to peace:

1. "Peace with God" – takes place at salvation and has to do with my standing before God (Rom 5:1)
2. "Peace of God" – the peace that rules the heart of the Christian and is a fruit of the indwelling Spirit (Phil 4:7; Col 3:15; Gal 5:22)
3. Note again that this precedes the command to contend.

C. Love

1. 'love' – the Divine love that God is (I. John 4:8, 16). Self-less love, love that goes beyond human emotions and demonstrates itself in service for others (I. Corinthians 13).
2. Biblical love is prepared to confront error. It is not some emotional feeling that makes us gloss over sin and apostasy. True love is willing to correct and confront.

III. THE PREACHING TO THE SAINTS (Vs. 3-4)

These verses bring us to the heart and soul of the theme the Spirit of God had put on Jude's heart – contend for the faith! Let's consider four important truths about contending for the faith:

A. Who is to Contend – "beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you"

1. Remember, Jude is writing to the brethren, not just pastors and leaders (See Vs. 1). Are you sanctified by God the father? Are you preserved in Christ and called? Are you a Christian? Then the command to contend is for you.
2. The word '**exhort**' literally means to call alongside of. It means to urge, to encourage, to beseech. It was a word that was used to describe the speeches of leaders who would rouse their listeners to action. It was used of words that sent fearful and hesitant soldiers and sailors courageously into battle.
3. Jude says it is a necessity ('**needful**'). That means it is not optional! This command would have to be one of the most disobeyed by God's people.
 - a. Many seem to wrongly believe that not contending is a mark of spirituality. "Doctrine divides" they say so let's not emphasize doctrine! Nothing could be more unspiritual and unscriptural!
 - b. Others make excuses like "well I am not one of those people to get involved in battles". Or, "I'm too old for any fights". There are some fights you should stay out of that are personal or carnal nature (Prov. 26:17; 1 Pet. 4:15) but fighting for the faith isn't one of them!
4. Every believer is chosen to be a soldier. 2 Timothy 2:3-4 "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a **good soldier** of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that

he may please him who hath **chosen him to be a soldier.**” You are in Christ’s army whether you like it or not. The question is whether you are being a “good soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3) in the “good fight” of faith (1 Tim. 6:12; 2. Tim. 4:7).

B. How we are to Contend – “earnestly contend”

1. Passionately – the word ‘earnestly’ highlights this aspect. There is no place for half-heartedness. We need to be fervent, earnest and zealous in our stand for truth.
2. Painfully – the word ‘contend’ is a very strong word that speaks of an intense struggle. It was used in the ancient world to describe athletic contests (e.g. wrestling).
 - a. It is translated elsewhere as ‘fight’ (Jn. 18:36, 1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:7) and ‘strive’ (Lk. 13:24, 1 Cor. 9:25, Col. 1:29).
 - b. The root word is ‘αγωνίζου’ from which we get our English word ‘agonize’. The noun form of the word is used to describe the agony of Christ in the garden when his sweat became great drops of blood (Luke 22:44).
 - c. Contending for the faith is **not easy**. It involves some pain and sacrifice. It isn’t enjoyable on a human level though you can have a sense of God’s approval in your heart.
3. Practically – it is not enough to talk and preach about contending for the faith. Many talk but few act! Talk is meaningless if it is not backed up by action. Contending for the faith means actually contending! Your walk speaks louder than your talk. We need to stand fast and hold fast:
 - a. **STAND FAST** – literally means “to be stationary” hence, remaining firm in the same place. It means “to stand firm, hold one’s ground. The word speaks of a soldier who does not budge one inch from his post.”
 - STAND FAST IN THE FAITH: 1 Corinthians 16:13 “Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**, quit you like men, be strong.”
 - STAND FAST IN TRUE LIBERTY: Galatians 5:1 “**Stand fast therefore in the liberty** wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”
 - STAND FAST IN THE GOSPEL: Philippians 1:27 “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, **that ye stand fast in one spirit**, with one mind striving together for **the faith of the gospel**;”
 - STAND FAST IN THE LORD: Philippians 4:1 “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and

crown, so **stand fast in the Lord**, *my* dearly beloved.” 1 Thess. 3:8 “For now we live, if ye **stand fast in the Lord**.”

- **STAND FAST IN APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE:** 2 Thess. 2:15 “Therefore, brethren, **stand fast**, and **hold** the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” We are to separate from brethren who are walking contrary to Apostolic doctrine. 2 Thess. 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly**, and not after **the tradition** which he received of us.”
- Standing fast is the opposite to being blown around with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

b. HOLD FAST: To hold fast means to grasp, to hold on to something firmly as opposed to holding it loosely or letting it go. Keeping something firmly in one’s grip.

- **HOLD FAST TO WHAT IS GOOD:** 1 Thess. 5:21 “Prove all things; **hold fast** that which is good.”
- **HOLD FAST TO SOUND WORDS:** 2 Timothy 1:13 “**Hold fast the form of sound words**, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” We cannot afford to let go of the inspired Words of the Holy Spirit. This is why we stand unashamedly for the KJV.
- **HOLD FAST TO OUR CHRISTIAN PROFESSION:** Hebrews 10:23 “Let us **hold fast the profession of our faith** without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)”
- **HOLD FAST UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS:** Revelation 3:11 “Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast** which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” The church at Philadelphia already had a testimony for being faithful but Christ’s exhortation to them in light of His imminent return was for them to continue being faithful to the end.

c. BE STEADFAST: 1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, **be ye steadfast, unmoveable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

C. For What we are to Contend – “for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”

1. The Scriptural faith – “the faith”

- a. Note the definite article – “the faith”. The reference is not to your personal faith (subjective) but to objective faith. Gal 1:23 – “But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth **the faith** which once he destroyed.”

- b. This is confirmed by the phrase that follows “which was once delivered unto the saints”. We are to contend for the body of Divine truth revealed in the Word of God.
- c. Therefore, we are to earnestly contend for:
 - i. Salvation specifically. Note that Jude is exhorting them in the context of the “common salvation”. The apostates of Jude’s day attacked the doctrine of salvation. They denied the deity of Christ (Vs. 4) and followed Cain’s way of works (Vs. 11). Those who preach another Gospel are under the curse of God Almighty (Gal. 1:8-9).
 - ii. God’s Word generally. We are to contend for the whole Body of Divine truth. To put it simply, we are to contend for the Bible! We should not have the “essentials vs non-essentials” attitude when it comes to Bible doctrine. The only things we may classify as “non-essential” are things the Bible itself says are in that category (e.g., Romans 14 – diet and days).
- 2. The settled faith – “once delivered”. We stand for the completed Revelation as found in the Word of God. No further revelation is needed!
- 3. The entrusted faith – “to the saints” (See also 1 Tim. 1:11). God has entrusted the truth to His people and has used His people down through the ages to preserve the truth. God is the one who preserves His Word but one of the main means He uses is the saints.

D. Why we are to Contend – “For there are certain men crept in unawares” (Vs. 4)

Jude now outlines the reason this contention is necessary. The contention is focused on apostate men, false teachers who seek to infiltrate the church and corrupt it from within. Look at the Divine description of these men. They are:

- 1. Underhanded Men – “crept in unawares”. The phrase “crept in unawares” comes from a Greek word meaning to slip in alongside of secretly as if by a side door. The word was used of spies or traitors who would infiltrate an opposing camp. Infiltration is one of Satan’s chief tactics. Remember! Jude is writing to New Testament churches, not apostate ones. **Compromisers are Creeping Creeps.**
 - a. **They creep with moral impurity:** 2 Timothy 3:6 “For of this sort are they which **creep** into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,”
 - b. **They creep with doctrinal impurity:** Jude 1:4 “For there are certain men **crept in unawares**, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace

of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Galatians 2:4 “And that because of false brethren **unawares** brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:”

- c. **Part of the shepherd’s job is to keep creeps out of the congregation!** Acts 20:28-30 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. **For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you**, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” Pastors (shepherds) are supposed to protect the flock from wolves, not give them positions of leadership within the flock!
2. Unregenerate Men – “ordained to this condemnation”. The word ‘ordained’ means “to write down beforehand”. The word was used of public notices or announcements. They are on the public notice board of God’s Word that they are hell bound men. False teachers lead people into the fires of hell. It is serious!
3. Unholy Men – “ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness”. Note their lifestyle. Apostasy not only involves false doctrine but also a manner of life. Perverted doctrine leads to perverted deeds. Impure beliefs lead to impure behaviours. Corrupt precepts lead to impure practices.
 - a. **Ungodly** – this is one of the key words of the Book (Refer Vs. 14-15). It is the opposite of godliness. It refers to someone without reverence for God. It refers to someone who deliberately rebels against God’s law. It refers to someone who lusts and desires after evil things.
 - b. **Lascivious** – Here Jude gives specific detail of the nature of their ungodliness. The word ‘lasciviousness’ means unbridled, unrestrained, lust. They use God’s grace as a license to sin. This false view of God’s grace is very popular in our lukewarm age. Remember! Grace is freedom from sin not freedom to sin (Rom. 6:14). Remember! Grace teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly, not impurely (Titus 2:11-14).
4. Unbiblical Men – “denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Their belief system is characterised by:
 - a. Scepticism – Note the word ‘denying’ is in the present tense. Much of today’s theological world is defined by what it denies rather than what it believes. We are living in a sceptical, rationalistic age.

- b. Arianism – Central to the belief system of Apostates is a continual, persistent denial of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. They deny Christ as:
 - i. ‘Lord’ (δεσποτης) – means Master. The same word Paul uses in Titus 2:9 where he exhorts servants to be obedient to their own masters. Speaks of his authority.
 - ii. ‘God’ (θεος) – Rev 4:8 “...Lord God Almighty.” Speaks of his deity.
 - iii. ‘Lord’ (Κυριον) – equivalent to the O.T. word for Jehovah. Again, speaks of His Deity but also of His high Position.
 - iv. ‘Jesus’ (Ιησους) – Saviour. They deny the complete and perfect sacrifice of Christ.
 - v. ‘Christ’ (Χριστος) – The anointed Messiah

Conclusion:

1. Are you in the fight for truth today or have you given up in the battle? Have you become cold and lost your zeal for the truth?
2. Have you been influenced by the spirit of apostasy? Is your life unbridled and ungodly?