

How We Contend for the Faith

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading for today is taken from Jude, starting from verses 1-25. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were designated for this condemnation. Ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

And the angels, who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulge in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

[1 : 42] Yet, in like manner, these people also relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoned animals, understand instinctively.

Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain, to Balaam's error, and perished in Korah's rebellion.

These are hidden reefs at your love feast, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds swept away by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

[3 : 03] It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness, that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last time, there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.

It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourself up in your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourself in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that leads to eternal life.

And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

[4 : 34] Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you, blameless before the presence of his holy, of his glory with great joy, to the only God and our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, now and forevermore, and forever. Amen.

And thank you so much for reading for us. Thank you so much for reading.

Thank you so much for reading.

Let us hear this morning the Word of God afresh, and let Him have His way with us.

Let God's Word have its way with us. Although the entire letter has been read, we will direct our attention to verses 17 to 21.

[6 : 30] Let's take a moment to pray first. Heavenly Father, how grateful we are for the undeserved mercies that have come to us in Jesus Christ.

How grateful we are, Lord, that each day we serve you, we come to appreciate more and more how gracious you have been to us.

Lord, one of the ways that you are gracious to us is that you have preserved your word for us, that we do not have to live in this world aimlessly, without direction, but we have your word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

So, Father, would you draw near to us in this moment? Would you speak through your word? I ask, Lord, that you'd anoint me by your spirit, that you'd help me to proclaim your word, your people, for the glory of your name and for the good of our eternal souls.

We ask this now in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. At the very outset of this letter, Jude tells his original audience what his original intent was.

[8 : 01] His intent was to write to them about the common salvation. But he also says that he found it necessary, instead of doing that, to write to them to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Then Jude goes on to say why he had this change of heart. He had this need to say to them, you need to appeal, that he needed to appeal to them to contend for the faith.

And the reason was that there were certain men who had crept in among them unnoticed. And they were taking the grace of God and turning it into a license to sin.

Now, when we consider this letter, we are this morning starting in verse 17. So we've covered verses 1 to 16. And then the letter concludes with verses 24 to 25.

So if Jude was faithful to do what he said he was going to do, to appeal to them, to contend for the faith, since he, up to this point, has really just been describing the problem and talking about the judgment that awaited these men who were turning the grace of God into a license for sin, it seems to me that it would be in these five verses, verses 17 to 23, where Jude is going to give the instructions about how to contend for the faith.

[9 : 45] What we find in these five verses is five commands that Jude gives as he is concluding the letter. The letter really concludes at verse 23 in a proper way because it ends with the doxology.

But it is in these verses 17 to 23 where I believe we find how we are to contend for the faith. And this morning we are considering verses 17 to 21.

And there are two points that I want us to consider from these four verses. Jude tells us how to contend for the faith.

Jude says, I think, in five verbs that we find in verses 17 to 23. And we want to consider two of them found in verses 17 to 21 this morning.

The first verb is in verse 17. And it's the word remember. And so drawing from the words of Jude in verse 17, we contend for the faith by remembering the apostles' predictions.

[11 : 03] Jude's point is that Christ's apostles had collectively predicted what was happening at that time in the church. Jude was saying to them that what was going on, these men who had crept in and who were making the grace of God as it were a license for sin, who was bringing spiritual harm.

He was saying to them, this is no surprising thing. The apostles of Christ had prophesied this. They had predicted that this would happen.

And Jude's point in raising this seems to be that by remembering these predictions, we are in a position to contend for the faith.

We're not ignorant of what is happening. We are aware of what is happening because it has already been predicted. And Jude goes on to say that these scoffers, they are men who are following their own ungodly desires, their own ungodly passions.

And they reject the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Verse 19, Jude tells us of the fruit of their lives.

[12 : 18] He says that they are those who cause divisions among God's people and that they were worldly. Notice that Jude describes them.

Now, these are individuals who crept into the church. Jude describes them as being devoid of the spirit, which means that they did not have the Holy Spirit, which further means that they did not belong to Christ.

Jude is saying these are unbelievers. And Romans 8, verse 9, the apostle Paul says, anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ.

That is the way that God sets a seal on those who belong to him. He gives them his Holy Spirit. These men, Jude says, they were devoid of the spirit.

They did not belong to Christ. One of the examples of these predictions that Jude is referring to is found in 1 Timothy 4, verses 1 to 3.

[13 : 31] Paul writes, now the spirit expressly says that in the latter times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.

Notice the prediction.

And this is why those who depart from the faith can seem so sincere. Because they are deceived by deceitful spirits.

And their consciences have been seared. Their consciences don't work for them. Consciences have been burnt beyond spiritual sensitivity.

And so they can give themselves in these particular ways. And Jude's point is that when we remember the predictions of the apostles, that in the last days, these scoffers would come.

[14 : 57] They would come in among God's people. And they would have ungodly desires and passions. His point is that as we remember this, brothers and sisters, we are better positioned to contend for the faith.

Contend for the faith against these false teachers and against their false teaching and against their sinful conduct. And not be deceived. And not be influenced by them.

Now these words of Jude, though written some 2,000 years ago, they're still relevant to us today.

Jude said this would happen in the last days. And brothers and sisters, we are still in the last days. The last days began with the coming of the Lord Jesus. When Jesus came, it was the beginning of the last days. And when he finally returns, that would be the end of the last days.

And this comes out very clearly in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, when Peter got up the priest to explain to the people gathered what had happened.

[16 : 06] And he said to them, he said, what you're seeing is an old prophecy of the prophet Joel. This is the fulfillment of that prophecy. And Peter goes on and he actually quotes what Joel's prophecy said.

This is what the prophecy says. And in the last days, it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.

So what Peter was doing is Peter was saying, this pouring out of the spirit of God at this time is evidence that this is the last days.

And so we've been in the last days some 2,000 years. And so what Jude is saying is relevant to us today, brothers and sisters. We shouldn't think that this was a problem that was relegated to the church back in that day.

As a matter of fact, when you look at the problem that Jude highlights, he highlights the problem in verse 4. He says, for certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation.

[17 : 12] Ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

So what were they doing? They were taking grace and using it as a license to sin. And in so doing, they were denying the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

They were essentially saying that because the grace of God abounds, you really can live as you like. You can sin and you can just wipe your mouth and say, well, Lord, forgive me.

Because God's grace abounded is what they were actually teaching. And by so doing, by living their lives in a careless way and in a reckless way and a spiritually indifferent way, they were denying that Jesus was their Lord and Master because if he were their Lord and Master, they would live in obedience to him.

They would live in allegiance to him. Brothers and sisters, this is not new era. This is an old era, but it is with us.

[18 : 32] And it's the very thing that Jude addressed in that day. And I dare say that this is increasing today. This is abounding today where there are those who are saying it really doesn't matter how you live.

You're saved and so you belong to Christ and so you will always belong to Christ. So it really doesn't matter how you live. Brothers and sisters, it does matter how we live.

It matters how we live because if Jesus is our Lord and our Savior, if he is indeed our Master, we live in submission to him. We live in obedience to him and to his word.

And that is reflected in Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, we must contend for the faith. Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters, we must contend for the faith against such false teaching and against such sinful living.

Now, church leaders have a primary responsibility to do this. Church leaders are primarily charged with remembering these predictions of Christ's apostles against false teachers, against their false teaching, and to God themselves and to God the church as well.

[19 : 50] And church leaders have the responsibility to exercise church discipline when it becomes necessary, when there are those who are unrepentant about what they believe that's contrary to Scripture and how they live that is contrary to Scripture.

Church leaders are called to patiently confront that and call them to repentance. And when they don't repent, church leaders are called to be faithful to lead the church in removing such people from among the people of God.

And brothers and sisters, sometimes this calls us to walk away from certain friendships if they are unrepentant. Church leaders are called to be faithful to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ and to show allegiance to Him and to His Word.

If we have a brother or a sister, perhaps it would be a friend, who is persisting in believing what is contrary to God's Word and living in a manner that is contrary to God's Word.

Christ calls us to serve Him and to be in submission to Him in such a way that we are willing to part with those relationships.

[21 : 15] Not entirely. We don't write them off. But we recognize that there is an allegiance to Christ that must be maintained. And we may hold those relationships to some degree to call them to repentance.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes contending for the faith results in losing relationships. Brothers and sisters, sometimes contending for the faith in terms of contrary beliefs and also in terms of contrary behavior.

The second way that Jude calls us to contend for the faith is found in verses 20 and 21. And it's easy to miss because of the way the sentence is constructed.

Or the way we identify the call that Jude gives in these two verses to contend for the faith. We recognize it by locating the verb.

And the verb is keep. And it's at the beginning of verse 21. What Jude says is, keep yourselves in the love of God.

[22 : 49] And this is my second point. Jude, in verse 1, he refers to those who belong to Christ as the beloved of God.

The beloved of God who are kept for or kept by Jesus Christ. Now, as we try to understand what Jude is saying in verses 20 and 21 about keeping ourselves in the love of Christ, we have to understand it in light of what we have understood in the opening verse of this letter.

In the opening verse of this letter, we see that God's people are his beloved people. He has set his love upon them unmerited and unconditionally.

He has set his love upon them eternally. And they are kept by Jesus Christ. So clearly, Jude cannot be now saying to us that there are things that we can do to keep ourselves in the love of God.

It is contrary to the witness of Scripture to believe that God starts out setting his love upon us and then we must now do something to keep ourselves in his love.

[24 : 20] That's not what Jude is saying to us at all. We shouldn't understand verse 21 in that way.

The way I think we should understand verse 21 is that Jude is simply calling us as God's people to live the Christian life in a faithful way that reflects that we belong to God.

That reflects that we are God's people, that we are God's beloved people. Jude is calling us to persevere and thereby give witness to the fact that we belong to Christ.

And as others depart from the faith, as others distort the faith, Jude is calling us to persevere. And by so persevering, we will show ourselves to be God's beloved people.

I think one of the ways we could think about it is we could think about Jude addressing us in an outward kind of way.

[25 : 24] The outward kind of way is this way, that if we live lives that outwardly reflect that we are living in obedience to God's Word, in submission to God's Word, as those who belong to Jesus Christ, if we live in that outward way, then it gives evidence.

It points to us being in the love of God. It points to us as actually belonging to Him. But if we live contrary to that, then we are giving evidence that we really don't belong to God.

And if we don't belong to God, then we cannot be in His love. So I think we could think about what Jude is saying in that particular way. But here's what I don't want us to do for a split second, brothers and sisters.

Let us not think for a split second that Jude is calling us to do something to keep ourselves in the love of God that is unmerited, that is undeserved, and that will never be broken.

God ever sets His love upon us, it will never be a broken love. It will never be a broken love, brothers and sisters. And that should bring great comfort to us.

[26 : 38] That He who began a good work in us is also faithfully completed to the day of Jesus Christ. He doesn't say, I begin it and you finish it. No, He begins it and He finishes it.

What Jude calls us to do, especially in the context of so many denying the faith and turning away from the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. He calls us to live a life that is faithfully consistent with this truth that we will long to the Lord.

Now in verses 20 and 21, Jude then gives us three specific ways that he says that we are to keep ourselves in the love of God.

The first way is he tells us that we are to build ourselves up in our most holy faith. I think what Jude is saying is we are to keep ourselves in the love of God by building ourselves up in our most holy faith.

And more than that, he is saying you are to contend for the faith by living in this particular way, a consistent way that you belong to Christ.

[27 : 56] And you do that by building yourself up in your most holy faith. Jude is saying that we are to be strengthened in this faith that he calls us to contend for.

Exactly what is he saying to us to be built up in our most holy faith? First of all, what is the faith? It is not faith that some people think, well, if I have enough faith, I can do this, I can do that.

That's not the faith that Jude has in mind. The faith that he has in mind is the body of teachings, the body of doctrines that are the basis of the Christian life.

It is that body of teaching that Jesus passed on to the apostles and the apostles passed on to the church, the people of God. It is that body of teaching.

It teaches us how we are to, well, first of all, what we are to believe. And then in light of that, how we are to behave in accordance with God's written word.

[29 : 03] In Jude's day, it was more oral. It was being passed on orally. It had only begun to be written.

But now we have the completion of God's written word in the scriptures. And so this is the body of teaching.

This is the faith which we are to hold to and which we are to guard. And at the center of this faith that we have is this common salvation that Jude has written about or wanted to write about.

And the heart of that salvation is the gospel. And we are to, as Jude says, we should be building ourselves up on this.

It means to be growing in understanding. It means to be growing in our knowledge of these things. Knowledge of God's word. Knowledge of salvation. Knowledge of the gospel.

[30 : 02] Knowledge of God as he has revealed in the scriptures. That's the way we build ourselves up. That is the way we grow. That is the way we mature. That is the way we position ourselves to be able to contend with the faith.

This doesn't happen in a vacuum. It doesn't just drop out of thin air into our heads. We must be giving ourselves to God's word.

Settings like this, times like this, when we gather on the Lord's day and we can open God's word and we can receive from God's word. As we memorize scripture, in any setting where we can be

with brothers and sisters in Christ and God's word is open, that is an opportunity for us to build ourselves up in our most holy faith.

That is the way we are to contend. That is the way we are to guard against false teachers and false teaching. Brothers and sisters, where does God's word stand in our lives?

What place does it have? Does it have a place of prominence? Does it have a place of intentionality that Jude is calling us to where he says we're to be building up ourselves on our most holy faith?

[31 : 27] Are we spending time in God's word personally? Are we taking advantage of opportunities corporately to grow in our knowledge and our understanding of God's word?

That's the only way that we're going to be built up on it. And that is the only way that it's going to be reflected in our lives as we live as those who belong to Christ.

And this is a lifelong endeavor. This is not, we go to a certain point and then we don't need to do it anymore until our dying breath, until the day the Lord returns, we are to be building up ourselves in our most holy faith.

The second way that Jude tells us that we are to keep ourselves in the love of God with the view of contending for the faith is also in verse 20.

And he says, it is by praying in the Holy Spirit. And there are those who believe that this reference to praying in the Holy Spirit is referring to praying in tongues or speaking in tongues.

[32 : 37] But I think the context makes it clear that that is not what Jude is referring to. Tongues by nature are unintelligible words for them to be of any profit that needs to be an interpretation that God gives to whoever would have spoken them.

And so clearly, Jude is not referring to that. What Jude is referring to instead is he is referring to spirit-directed praying. He is referring to spirit-led praying.

Jude is referring to praying, mindful of the Spirit, dependent on the Spirit, allowing him to shape and direct our prayers and our desires as we pray.

And praying in the Spirit is evidence that we are being led by the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit is evidence that we are walking in step with the Spirit. Evidence that we are communing with the Spirit.

And what Scripture says is that those who walk by the Spirit will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

And so when we are walking by the Spirit, when we are being sensitive to the Spirit, being directed in prayer by the Spirit, brothers and sisters, we're not going to fulfill the desires of the flesh.

[34 : 03] and we will manifest lives that indicate that we belong to Christ and that we are living lives seeking to please him.

And so we need to consider this as well. Are our prayers marked by the guidance of the Spirit, being sensitive to the Spirit, how he would lead us?

And again, as I shared, as we looked at this last week, more fundamentally, are we praying at all? Brothers and sisters, we need to be people of prayer because we are dependent creatures.

We are needy creatures. We need the Lord day by day, moment by moment. We sing this song, I need thee every hour.

And one line of that is, in joy and in pain. We need the Lord, brothers and sisters, on our best day. We need the Lord when the sun is shining down on us and things are balmy and well.

[35 : 20] We need the Lord as much as when we are in the days of rain and difficulty and trial. We need the Lord. And so we must be people of prayer.

And if we are staying close to the Spirit, if we are communing with the Spirit, we're going to be living lives that are pleasing to the Lord, we're going to be sensitive to the things of God, we are going to be in a better position to contend for the faith.

We'll be protected against deception because the Spirit will not mislead us. And then the third and final way that Jude calls us to keep ourselves in the love of God is found in verse 21.

He said, it is in waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus that leads to eternal life. What is Jude referring to when he says that we have to be waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus that leads to eternal life?

Haven't we already received mercy those of us who belong to Christ? Do we not already have eternal life to those of us who belong to Christ? And the answer to both is yes.

[36 : 44] So what is Jude referring to? I think what Jude is referring to is the fullness of that mercy that we have received and the fullness of eternal life that we have received.

Brothers and sisters, yes, we have these in truth and we have them in reality in some measure but not in ultimate measure.

The ultimate measure of the mercy of God that will come to us is when Christ returns. And the fullness of eternal life that we have will be ours when Christ returns.

waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. Jude is calling us to live not absentmindedly but a conscious awareness that Christ will one day return and return for those who has purchased possession. And this is what is consistent with being God's beloved children. Because you know what? when we live with this awareness and this anticipation of Christ's return, it dulls this world's attractions.

[38 : 04] It dulls this world's allurements. It helps us to live lives that are consistent with what scripture teaches is consistent with those who belong to him.

perhaps us to guard against setting our affections on this world and instead setting them on the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the effects of anticipating and waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John tells us in 1 John chapter 3 verses 1 to 3 he writes, See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

And this is the part of the this is the verse that I want to direct your attention to especially. He writes, And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

[39 : 49] What John is saying is that when we are looking for and longing for and anticipating the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, it calls us and will cause us to live in a certain way.

He says we purify ourselves as we are pure. We know in and of ourselves we cannot purify ourselves because our best effort of purification is not 100%. But what he is calling us to is this active resistance to sin, this active fighting of sin, this active pursuit of holiness.

Grace motivated, yes, but real effort nonetheless. He is saying that when we are looking for the return of Christ, we will live in a particular way.

We cannot, brothers and sisters, in reality, look for Christ, expecting his return, and then live careless lives.

It's inconsistent to do that. We are truly looking for Christ. We are readying ourselves to see him. And please don't think for a moment that what Jude is calling us to is to disengage from this life.

[41 : 09] He's not doing that at all. we are to engage this life. We are to take our responsibilities seriously. We are to fulfill them. As we do them, we must remember that we are pilgrims.

We don't call this world our home. This world is not our home. We look for the day when Christ will return. He will take us home. Meanwhile, we live faithfully as fathers, as mothers, as employees. In whatever responsibilities we have in this life, we engage them faithfully, but we do so mindful that one day our Savior is going to return. Perhaps even before he returns that we may be called to him in death.

We want to live lives that are mindful of these realities. And so brothers and sisters, we are called to watch for the return of Christ.

Watch for the mercy that will be ours, the eternal life that will be ours in fullness. What Jude is really saying is one, we keep ourselves in the love of God in this way, but ultimately we are contending for the faith by living this way.

[42 : 33] Certainly, we have to contend for the faith with words. Brothers and sisters, we can also contend for the faith by how we live. Because when others are departing and being unfaithful and distorting, as we live faithfully before the Lord, we are contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

So the Lord calls us to. He calls us to look and wait for his return. Jude believed that by doing these things, he his original audience, to his writing, that they would guard themselves, they would protect themselves, these ones who had infiltrated the church, and they would be faithful in contending to his name. So I consider these words of Jude calling us to wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal life that awaits us.

More that this is something that only those who belong to Christ can do. Those who don't belong to Christ have no interest in doing this.

They are living for themselves. They are living for this life. And yet, when Christ returns, yes, he will return to receive his people to himself, but he will also return as the judge of all flesh.

[44 : 13] he will return as the judge of the universe. And so if you're here this morning or you're listening online and you do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the good news is that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners.

He has lived a perfect life that none of us could live, and then he has died a substitutionary death, on the cross, all those would put their trust in him.

And this offer of the good news, if received by you, you come to Christ, he makes this promise, he will never turn you away.

So I say to you this morning, believe the good news, turn from your sin, and trust in Jesus. us, and you can be among those who are his beloved people, and so you will always be.

Let's pray. Father, we are so grateful for the mercy that you have shown us in Jesus Christ.

[45 : 40] Thank you, Lord, for saving us and keeping us. Thank you for reminding us how we are to contend for the faith. Help us, Lord, to be mindful that we do this not in our own strength, but we do it by the grace that you alone provide.

Lord, we are to us, Lord, in ways that only you can and ways that you know that we need to hear from you. Work in all of our hearts.

In Christ's name. Amen. Amen.