

Countering Nominal Christianity (2)

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[0 : 0 0] Now we're going to turn this morning again to the letter of Jude, just a few pages on from where we read in 1st John. The letter of Jude, and we can today look at verses 3 and also 20 and 21.

So we'll just read these three verses, verse 3 and verses 20 and 21. 1. Beloved, though I was 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.

2. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

2. Last week we looked at some verses of Jude as well at the beginning there, verses 3 and 4. And notice that Jude's letter, as we said, is an epistle really against nominal Christianity.

The kind of Christianity that doesn't really get down to believing and accepting and living out some of the most important features of the Christian faith.

[1 : 2 1] And we notice that Jude speaks about the faith, which is not our faith or our believing, but what our believing rests on, namely the foundational doctrines and teachings of Christianity.

The things like the resurrection of Christ and our justification by faith in Him and all the various things that you know are the core elements of Christianity. That's the faith.

Not the power and not the kind of life that it ought to have. It comes about like that. And it's to do with the doctrines and the ethics, the doctrines and the way of life that Christianity itself contains and promotes and that are actually denied in nominal Christianity, at least denied in practice.

So you could have nominal Christianity in the sense in the sense of the doctrines.

Set of doctrines. But then fails really to believe them in practice. And to live them out in practice. That too would be nominal Christianity. And you get other kinds of deviations from that or things that develop from that.

[3 : 2 6] That's what Jude basically is dealing with. He's writing against nominal Christianity. And today we're going to look from these verses at how he talks about contending for this faith and also at the same time keeping ourselves in the love of God.

Because when you're facing nominal Christianity, these are the two things you've really got to be involved with doing. You've got to contend for the real version. For the real Christianity.

For the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Now you have to actually contend for that as we'll see in a minute. But at the same time, you've got to make sure that you're looking after yourself.

Or that a congregation of believers is looking after themselves. So that's why he speaks in verses 20 and 21 of keeping ourselves in the love of God. And we'll look at how that is and what that means.

Contending first of all for the faith. There is a faith to fight for. He's saying here in verse 3, I'm writing appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

[4 : 35] In other words, it's not enough for us to know what this faith is. You have to actually contend for this faith. You have to fight for it. It's a faith worth fighting for.

It's a Christianity worth fighting for. It's a life worth fighting for. Because of all that's contained in it. And all that is attached to it. Both for time and for eternity.

And for the glory of God. And for the sake of Christ. It's a faith worth fighting for. And the word contending there. It's like many times in the New Testament.

You find words taken from the Olympic Games or athletic contests. Paul uses this quite a lot. Judas using it here. It's a word which was used, for example, for wrestlers.

In those days, not wrestling in the kind of fancy way you sometimes see it. Not that I watch it, but I know it's there. What is it? W-W-W-O, whatever. All this flashy stuff.

[5 : 32] It's all, most of it, pretense. At least we're told it is. This is the kind of wrestling where you really just got to grapple with your opponent. And you won. Still the case in the Olympics, if you watch it.

You won when you actually pinned your opponent to the deck. When through strength and certain moves and skill. You're actually hitting your opponent. And you're managing to get them on their back.

And you pin them there for a while. And that's you. You've won the contest. And this is what Judas is saying to us. We're facing the kind of opponent. Unless you take it on.

You're going to be pinned on your back spiritually and morally. It's the kind of power. It's the kind of enemy that has infiltrated the wider church. The church, as you see it, called the church of Christ.

It's the kind of thing that Judas is facing where he's saying, This is something you've got to contend for. And when you're contending for the faith, Well, obviously you're contending against all the things that are actually enemies of that faith.

[6 : 36] And if we're not contending for it, If we're not actually wrestling against the varieties of false Christianity, Of other religions that threaten Christianity, We're just confining it to nominal Christianity, We have to contend for the faith.

It's a wrestling. And indeed you can take the idea really into the whole idea of spiritual warfare. If you just extend the idea of an athletics contest such as wrestling, You extend that idea into warfare.

You're engaged with an enemy. An enemy that's bent on destroying you. An enemy that's bent on actually wiping you out. That is what nominal Christianity would do if you leave it alone.

You've got to contend for the faith. You have to actually fight for a faith worth fighting for. Just imagine somehow, God forbid, That like happens in some parts of the world, Supposing one of our family was taken captive, Or an attempt was made, To actually break in and take somebody who belongs to you, And is dear to you away captive somewhere.

Maybe for a ransom or whatever. Well, you would do everything in your power to get them back. You'd do everything in your power, first of all, To stop it happening. But if it did happen, You'd be something like Abraham in Genesis 14, Where you'd actually go in search of the person you love, And do everything possible, Even to the point of engaging in a warfare, Against those who've taken them captive, In order to get them back.

[8 : 17] When real, Living Christianity, Is being taken over by nominal Christianity, You want the real thing back. You want the real thing replaced, Replacing what has come to take over from it.

You want as much as possible, To do your utmost, To preserve what you've got, But also to extend it, So that the nominal Christianity threatens it, And in many cases has actually taken over already, Is itself pushed back.

And the real thing comes instead, To be shown, And lived out. By the church of Christ in the world. And you can see, Some of the things that are involved in this, As we saw, In fact, We didn't really go into it, But we noticed it in verse 4, That people, Ungodly people, Who pervert the grace of our God, Into sensuality.

That's where the ethics come into it, The lifestyle. And deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. And that really takes you into an area, That's very, Very relevant today, It's not just a matter of doctrine, What people believe, It's a matter of ethics, How people live, How people behave.

And when you find, A version of Christianity, That says, Oh but sensuousness is alright, What we normally call, Immorality, And immoral relationships, That's alright, Because we're living in 2013, We're not living back in the days of Jude, And in the days of Paul, And the thinking of their day, Is outdated now for Christians, You've got to keep up with the world, You've got to keep up with things, As human beings develop, In their thinking, In their discoveries, So you've got to adjust things, Well we saw last time, If you adjust, What is foundational in doctrine, Especially if you adjust, The word of God itself, And what you believe it to be, Nothing else is safe, Nothing else is secure, And what had happened in Jude's day, Was both doctrine, And practice, Had been adjusted, Had been warped, Because the word is perverting, And perverting means, You twist things, You angle them about,

[10 : 32] You actually manipulate them, So that they serve your own purposes, And that's what some people were doing, In the church of Jude's day, People who had crept in, And were taking over, With this nominal Christianity, And had perverted the grace of a God, The whole doctrines of grace, And how people come, To be right with God, And what sort of life, God expects of his people, They had perverted that, Into sensuality, Sexual immorality, Things in that sort of lifestyle, That's why, This is so absolutely relevant, And up to date, And applicable, To the age, The generation, You and I, Are today part of, The society, That you and I today, Are part of, Because that is what's, Constantly being thrown at us, You're out of date, You guys, Who believe the Bible, As it is, Who take Jude,

And Paul, And Peter, At face value, You've got to change your ideas, You're changing your view, Of this Bible, And actually better, If you, If you just put the Bible, A bit aside, And add, Other things to it, Well, Whatever way, You find, The grace of God, Twisted, Into sensuality, Is an enemy, Of the gospel, And it's an enemy, Of the, The pure faith, That God has given, To his people, The faith, Once for all, Delivered, To the saints, And you have to, Along with that, Of course, Went to denying, Our only master, And Lord, Jesus Christ, Because, If we're saying, That Christ is our saviour, Then, He's the Lord, Of all of life, What I do, In my spare time, As well as, What I do in church, And what I do at home, Just as much as, What I do in a worship service, He's the Lord, Of all of life, And if we actually, Step, Into an area, Where we've, Perverted the grace of God,

And become, Nominally Christian, And actually, Bring things in, Which the Bible, Denounces as sinful, Or immoral behaviour, And say, That's alright, If you give the name, Christian to it, We're denying, The only Lord, And master, Jesus Christ, We're denying, His claim upon life, We're denying, His Lord, Upon His says, You live by my standards, If you're to be my people, And to go out, With that standard, Is to deny him, It's to throw it in his face, It's to say, Ah, But we know better, Than your Lord should know, Because nowadays, We've come to discover things, Which you didn't know, Is this the word of God, Or not, Is this the word, That brings us the faith, Or not, Yes it is, Of course it is, So therefore, We have to contend, For that faith, Mustn't be, At all, Ourselves, In any sense, Relaxed about,

Coming to contend, For the faith, Not enough just to know, Your doctrines, It's important to know, Your doctrines, It's important, To know the things, That are basic, To the gospel, It's important, To have a proper knowledge, Of these doctrines, But you need to contend, For them, And if we're not, Living by them today, Openly, Practically, In our lives, If we're not showing, That is, What we value, As Christian doctrine, In the way, That it affects our lives, If we're not, Living lives, That are given to Christ, That, Where Christ is openly, The Lord of our lives, Well that means, We're not contending, For the faith, We're not fully, Supporting that faith, We're drawing back, From being, In support of it, To the point of contending, It's, It's, It's very easy, To, To really just, Accept the doctrines, For what they are,

And say, I believe all of that, I believe, This, This Bible, Is a special book, I believe, The teaching it contains, I believe, In God, As it's revealed, In this Bible, I believe, In what it says, About Jesus, What he did, In this world, What he did, In his death, On the cross, I believe, That he did rise, From the dead, The Bible is plain, About that, Reliable people, Saw him afterwards, But, That's different, That's still short, Actually coming to, Receive that in a way, That just builds, Your life upon it, As we'll see in a minute, And, Has come to, Give your life into, The custody, The lordship, The, The grace of that Christ, That's what's, Required of all of us today, Doesn't matter what stage of life, We're at, It doesn't matter, Whether we've been, Openly Christians for years, It doesn't matter even, If we've not yet, Come to the point, Of giving our lives to Christ, This is saying to us, Contend for the faith,

[15 : 37] Do everything possible, To contend, For the faith, That God has given, To his people, Because that's, The least that God, Requires of us, Not the most, It's the least, You think of all that he's done for us, You think of everything, That Jesus did, In going to the cross, You think of the extent, To which God loved us, In going to these lands, To provide for us, The salvation that you have, From God the Father, Through Jesus Christ, By the Holy Spirit, And then, You ask yourself, Well, Isn't it worth contending, Doing everything in my power, To actually contend, For this faith, For this salvation, For this gospel, For this Christianity, So there's this, Contending, But then he goes to speak about, Keep yourselves, In verse 20, You beloved, Building yourselves up, In your most holy faith,

Praying in the Holy Spirit, Keep yourselves, In the love of God, That's the main phrase there, Keep yourselves, In the love of God, And that's not, Our love for God, He's talking about something here, In which you're protected, In which you actually, Ensure, Day by day, As you live your life, That you're living it, Within the custody, Within the protection, And within the keeping, Of the love of God, Of God's love, For us, That's what it means, And when you think about, The love of God, In that sense, What does that really mean, Well it means effectively, Everything that God, Has provided for us, In his love, Especially, As that has been, Shown, And proved in Christ, And in his death especially, Remember, Well the famous verse, John 3, 16, God so loved the world, That he gave, His only begotten son, That's where he's,

Shown his love, Most prominently, He gave, His only begotten son, He gave him, Means he gave him over, He gave him over, To the dead he died, And Romans 5, Verse 8, Picks up on that, Where Paul says, That God, Has demonstrated, He has proved, His love to us, Where?

In that while, We were yet sinners, Christ, Died for us, Nobody needs to, Ask, Where is the proof, Of God's love?

The proof, Of God's love, Is the cross, Of Calvary, If that doesn't, Prove, The love of God, To you, And to me today, There is nothing else, In the whole universe, That will prove it, Because that is, The greatest proof of it, That is demonstrable, Proof of it, That is proof, Beyond reasonable doubt, God so, Proved his love, That while, We were yet sinners, We had nothing to do with it, Except that it was for us, Christ, Died for us, And, That's the provision, Everything that's in him, As the love of God, Has provided a saviour, Just ask the question, What do you get, When you get Christ as saviour?

[18 : 57] Well you get everything, That's necessary, You get justification, You get forgiveness, Of sins, You get your sins pardoned, You get your guilt taken away, You get adoption, You're established, As one of the family of God, You get a living hope, Towards eternity, As it will be in heaven, You get that hope, Coming to be, Something that you know, In your life, You get God's care, You get God's fatherly protection, You get the guidance, And the power of the Holy Spirit, Within you, Where God lives in you, And from then on, Continues to prepare you, For heaven, And that's what he's saying, Is the love of God, Keep yourself, In the love of God, As you're facing, Nominal Christianity, As you're facing, Other threats in the world, To what you believe, And how you live, You're safe, Within the love of God, You've got to keep yourself, Within the love of God,

And the provision, Of God's love for you in Christ, You have to keep yourself, That's where you're safe, But then your question is, Well how do I keep myself, In the love of God, How do I go about, If I know that the love of God, Is all that he's provided for me, In Christ, If that's the love of God, And it's provision for me, If that's where I've got to, Keep myself safe, How do I go about doing that, Well you go about doing that, In the three things, That are mentioned, In relation to it, Because first of all, You're building yourselves up, Upon your most holy faith, And secondly, Praying in the Holy Spirit, And thirdly, Waiting for the mercy, Of our Lord Jesus Christ, That leads to eternal life, In other words, Keeping yourself, In the love of God, Primarily, In Jude's version of it, Through these three things, And when you're doing, These three things, You're actually going about, Setting,

You're actually going about, Keeping yourself, In the love of God, Surrounding yourself, With that protective covering, Of the love of God, In Christ, Look at them, Very briefly, Building yourselves up, In your most holy faith, Now, It should really be, Better translated, I think, Building, Yourself upon, Your most holy faith, Remember, What we saw, The faith, Means, In Jude's epistle, It's, The, Basic, Foundational doctrines, It's, It's Christianity, In our words, And the doctrines, That form, Christianity, Or the, The core of Christianity, The resurrection of Christ, The death of Christ, All of these things, That are fundamental, And important, Foundationally, To our Christian, Life, That's the Christian faith, What he's saying here, Build yourselves up, Upon that, You have all of these things,

In the gospel, You have all of these things, Revealed in the bible, You have all of these things, Provided for, By the love of God, Therefore, Build yourselves up, Upon your most holy faith, Take the things, That God has given, As a foundation, For your life, The faith, Itself, Build your life, Upon that, Build yourselves up, Upon that, Continue to actually, Build up your life, Spiritually and morally, On that foundation, I'm sure you've heard about, The building that's, Gone up in London, Called the shard, It looks like, A sort of, Shard of glass, Just like you break a window, You get a shard of glass, Almost diamond shaped, Or whatever, That building has got, A very small area, But it's, Huge, In its height, And, An absolutely amazing feat, Of engineering, As all of these,

High buildings are, Well if you look at, You'll get evidence, On the, You'll get details, On the internet, On the web, About how it was built, And so on, There's been programs too, On television, What's the foundation like?

[23 : 17] I can't remember, How high it is, But it's one of the tallest, Buildings now, In Europe, What's the foundation like? How does it stay up? How did they actually, Come to build it up, To that height?

Well we're told, The foundations, Actually, Are 53 metres deep, Into the ground, 53 metres, Of concrete piles, With an inner steel core, 53 metres, Into the ground, And for the foundations, Themselves, Something like, 700 truckloads, Of cement, Of concrete, For the foundations, Themselves, And even, Well builders, Of course, Will appreciate, What that is, Those who, Some of them here, Are building, Buildings every day, Of their lives, They'll realise, How much concrete that is, But even, To someone like myself, Who isn't skilled, Or most of yourselves, Who don't really know, What 700, 700 truckloads, Of concrete, Looks like, When you take, A barrel of cement, And realise, How heavy a barrel is, 700 huge truckloads, Of cement, Is massive, That's what's, In the foundations, Of it, 53 metres deep, With all that concrete,

And that's just, The foundation, But it's like that, Because otherwise, They couldn't have built it, In the way they have, And what, Jude is saying is, You're actually building, For eternity, The things that are, Vastly, Of more importance, Than anything of this world, Are the things which are, Going to live, And abide forever, With you, Your relationship with God, Having eternal life, Your sin forgiven, The righteousness, That is in Christ, How do you build up, Your life, So that at the end, Of your course in this world, You're actually, Going to have a, A life that's intact, Well you need a foundation, And your foundation, Is the faith, It's in these great, Doctrines, As they are applied, And lived out, In your life, As they're appropriated, And taken to yourself, And believed, And accepted, And lived out, That's your foundation, You build yourselves, Up upon,

Your most holy faith, And, Remarkable as though, The foundations, Of the shard, Are, What's that compared, To, What God has given us, As a foundation, For eternity, The shard's not going, To last forever, But the life, That you have in Jesus, Because it's anchored, In the faith, And you notice, The trinitarian structure, Of these verses, Just going to mention, This briefly, It mentions God the Father, Which is mentioned, The love of God, That's especially, God the Father, It mentions, Praying in the Holy Spirit, It mentions also, Waiting for the mercy, Of our Lord Jesus Christ, The three persons, Of the Godhead, The Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit, Go back again, To the shard building, And its foundation, It needs more than, Just the concrete piles,

And the steel, That's inside them, They have to actually, Be planted, In the bedrock, Of the ground itself, And it's the bedrock, Of the ground itself, That's the ultimate foundation, That's what the foundation, The concrete foundation, Of the building, Rests upon, And is built into, If you like, And then the building, Is built, On top of that again, So you've got the building, And its foundation, And you've got beneath it, All the bedrock, The ground, That really is important, To keep the whole thing up, And that's how it is, With our salvation, You build up your life, On your most holy faith, And your most holy faith, Itself rests, On the ultimate bedrock, Of the living God himself, The Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit, What's going to shift that, What's going to knock that building out,

[27 : 34] And destroy it, Nothing, Building yourselves up, Upon your most holy faith, And there's one other thing there, That's important, Just to mention it, Building up yourselves, Means, Doing this together, That's the importance, Of being in fellowship, Of being the church of God, In the world, Of having each other, To help build each other's lives up, It's not something, That God, Wants us to do on our own, It's not something, That you can do effectively, On your own, It's something, That you do together, Building yourselves, Up together, On your most holy faith, And then secondly, Praying, In the Holy Spirit, That's a favorite verse, Of Pentecostal, Charismatic type Christians, Who actually take that sort of verse, And say, You know, Unless you become, One of us, And our thinking, In charismatic utterances, And kind of,

Charismatic, Ecstatic praying, Unless you're slain in the spirit, Unless you have, The spirit reaching, These heights of emotion, You're not praying, In the spirit, What does Jude mean, By praying in the spirit?

Well you compare it, With verse 19, Because these nominal Christians, Are distinguished, By this, They are devoid, Of the spirit, They don't have the spirit, And what Jude is saying, The true Christian has, Not just the Pentecostal, Charismatic type of Christian, But every true Christian, In other words, Praying in the Holy Spirit, Is not, Just praying, Where normally, We speak about, Well, He got great liberty, In prayer, Or she had great liberty, In prayer, Prayer where, Our emotions are truly, Moved to the extent, That we're on an emotional high, Sometimes in prayer, It does happen, It's not, Actually think of it, As something that's, Not at all proper, If God gives us, That, That sense of, Of emotion, In prayer, When we're praying to him, Either publicly, Or privately, So be it, But when you're praying, In your knees, And you're in agony,

About something, And you can hardly, Get the words, And you're wrestling, With God, And you're praying, For someone, Or you're praying, For some people, And you're actually, Seeking God's blessing, For them, And their lives, To be changed, And them to accept, Christ, Or whatever it is, You're praying about, And you can hardly, Put the words together, Don't let, Charismatic, Thinks you're not, Praying in the spirit, Every Christian, For every true prayer, Prays in the spirit, Without the spirit, You wouldn't have prayer, At all, What he's saying to us, Is pray, Not like those, Who are nominal Christians, Who are maybe content, To read something, Out of a book, Praying in the spirit, Means genuine, Sincere prayer, Even if it seems, That you're just, Struggling to other people, Or even to yourself, If you're praying, To the Lord, And praying sincerely, To the Lord, You're praying in the spirit, You have that,

From the spirit, You can be assured, It's a spirit, Led prayer, Well that's what he's saying, We keep ourselves, In the love of God, By building ourselves up, On our most holy faith, By praying, In the Holy Spirit, Prayer, Is a vital, Vital part, Of keeping ourselves, Safe within the love of God, And thirdly, There's the emphasis, On, Waiting for, The mercy of our Lord, Jesus Christ, That leads to eternal life, In other words, You anticipate, Christ's return, Because that's what, That verse has got to do with, You keep yourselves, You keep yourselves, In the love of God, By anticipating, Christ's return, By looking forward, To his coming back again, Because, The word really means, An eager anticipation, Of something, Waiting for it, It's something, That you do, Actively, Actively, And eagerly, It's something, Well, Just compare it,

[31 : 55] Although, This is of course, Much more important, Than any holiday, You might go on, But you're going to, A special holiday, Maybe an anniversary, Or something, You've chosen a special place, You've never been to before, It's the kind of place, You've always wanted to go to, And of course, From the moment, You make your bookings, You're eagerly anticipating, Going there, You really want to, Experience and realize, In your experience, In actually being there, What you anticipate, It's going to be like, Well, Here is, Jude saying, There's one thing, Yet that remains, To cap, To crown, To complete, The salvation, Of God's people, And it's the return, Of Christ, It's Jesus, Coming to actually, Bring out his own, Verdict as Lord, Over all of humanity, And to gather his people, Together especially, And say to them, Come you blessed of my father, Inherit this kingdom, That's for you, That's what we're,

Waiting for, That's what we're anticipating, It may not happen, During our lives, In this world, It may be thousands, Of years from now, For all we know, But one thing, Is absolutely sure, It's going to happen, And it's going to happen, In a way, That you and I, Will be involved in it, Either, As those who've, Eagerly anticipated it, Or those who've, Dreaded that moment, But those, Who are his, And I hope, That's all of us today, We eagerly anticipate, The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, That leads to eternal life, Because, Very often, The return of Christ, Includes words like, Mercy, I suppose then, It's, It's then really, In a sense, That, The whole extent of God's mercy,

Will be, Fully revealed, As never before, When the Lord's redeemed people, Will be shown, In that whole salvation, In Christ, Then, You will be able to say, What an amazing thing, That mercy of God is, That that's what it's produced, And that's what's coming, In the Lord Jesus Christ, For his people, You're waiting, You're eagerly anticipating, That mercy, In other words, You're living your present life, In relation, And in the view of eternity, You're constantly relating it, To the world to come, And that's how you keep yourself, In the love of God, So what is it all, How do you bring it all together, Well, You contend, For this faith, Once delivered to the saints, You fight on it, It's a faith worth fighting, You do everything possible, To both defend it, And to promote it, In doctrine,

In your beliefs, In ethics, In the way you live, And you keep yourself, At the same time, Within the love of God, How? By building yourselves up, On your most holy faith, By praying in the Holy Spirit, By eagerly anticipating, The coming of Christ, That leads to eternal life, And these, Are the ways, By which Jude counsels us, To live our lives, In this world, Not just important, In regard to the glory of God, In the present way, Of the true gospel, Being shown, And kept, It's important too, For our own eternity, And what eternity, Will be for us, Either, In God's favor, Or otherwise, So that's countering, Nominal Christianity, And one other study, God willing, Next time, We'll look at, The next part of it, Towards the end of the chapter, Where you've got, A rescuing job, Being carried out,

As well as, The glory that's ascribed, To God, At the end, Of the epistle, So let's, Continue to pray, Gracious Lord, We pray that, You would enable us, Day by day, To contend for that faith, That you have revealed to us, In the gospel, Help us to prize it, Highly, Help us to live it out, Help us to consider, What ways, We ourselves, In our generation, Have to contend for it, We pray that, You would enable us, Lord, To build up ourselves, Upon that holy faith, And to keep on praying, In the spirit, And to go on, Looking forward to your return, And so that we may, Keep ourselves thereby, Within your love, And all its provisions, Receive our thanks, We pray now, For Jesus' sake, Amen.