

Jude: Contending for the Faith



Open your Bibles to the New Testament book of Jude. This will be Exit 65 as we continue our travel down Route 66. Our purpose in this sermon series is to capture the big picture of each book. In capturing that big picture, we can begin to understand why each book is in the Bible, which ultimately helps us see the big story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, taking us from a garden of ruin to a city of restoration.

My wife and I have been in a new phase of our lives for the last six years. We have grandchildren. I am still amazed every time the grandchildren are at our house. They were over just last night because their dad is in Nicaragua, so their mom brought them over for supper. I am amazed how Finley, the second born loves, respects, and adores his older brother, Crider. It is not that Crider is unworthy of that respect or love, but as the Finley gets older, he is being heavily influenced by his big brother. When Finley was younger, he would do what he wanted to do and one thing he loved was to go with Papaw. He loved to drive the tractors. All I had to tell him was that Papaw was going to go drive the tractor and he was ready to go. But now when I tell Finley what I am going to do and ask if he wants to go, this is the first thing out of his mouth, "Is Crider going?" Now Crider likes to stay here on the farm to help with the cows. Finley doesn't like the cows; he likes the farm equipment. But since he has gotten older, Finley wants to stay on the farm with Crider, even though he doesn't like cows

and he would really rather be driving a tractor. He wants to do what Crider is doing.

It is amazing how an older sibling sets the standard in the family. Many times, the youngsters want to be like them. We want to be with them. Can you imagine what it would have been like to grow up with Jesus as your older brother? That is Jude. The Bible tells us that Mary and Joseph, after the birth of Jesus, had other children - James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. You are thinking wait, we are studying the book of Jude...That's right. They shortened his name. We don't exactly know why they did, but I have a guess. There was one of the original twelve whose name was also Judas, Judas Iscariot, and he betrayed Jesus. Can you imagine having the name Judas in the Christian church? So I think they shortened his name from Judas to Jude. His name means praise. I don't know anyone who, as a Christian, would name their child Judas. We don't even name our dogs Judas. It is kind of like the name Benedict. Benedict Arnold messed that name up.

We are going to study a letter by a man named Jude, who was not only the brother of James, but he was the half-brother of Jesus. He doesn't call himself the half-brother of Jesus, but he does say he is the brother of James. He doesn't want us to see Jesus as a brother to him. He wants us to see Jesus as his master and as his Lord and Savior.

Our Scripture text will be verses 1-4. Jude is a short letter. Scholars believe this is the most neglected book of all of the books in the Bible by the Christian church today. I pray as this sermon progresses, you will come to believe that this is a necessary letter to the church in America, and especially to the church in the Bible belt of the United States of America.

Scripture

"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.”

To me, it is obvious that you have to title Jude, Contending for the Faith. As we outline this book that talks about contending for the faith, four questions will be answered:

1. Who? (Verses 1-2)
2. What? (Verses 3-4)
3. Why? (Verses 5-19)
4. How? (Verses 20-25)

When we outline and travel through Jude, verses 1-2 will answer the question, who is Jude writing? Once we have answered that question, we will answer the question of verses 3-4, what is his purpose in writing? Then, verses 5-19 will answer the question, why is it necessary for him to write this letter? That is the bulk of the message. Then we will close out the message by looking at verses 20-25, and answer the question, how do we contend for the faith? There are some helpful thoughts in those last verses of Jude’s letter that will actually help you and I contend for the faith.

Who?

Who is Jude writing? He is writing to the called, to the beloved, and to the kept. Because Jude’s audience is Jewish, and because the number three was very important in Jewish numerology, you will see that there are many repetitions of three in the book of Jude. So he identifies his audience three ways, as the called, the beloved, and the kept. We have seen this throughout the Bible. The Bible is clear that it is not man who takes the initiative in salvation, but it is God. He is writing to a group of people who

have had the Holy Spirit of God use the gospel to effectually call them to salvation in Jesus Christ. It was not just merely to invite them to receive something, but to command them to a life of repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. They have not only been called, but they have been loved in God the Father. Wow! Scripture just will not let us forget this. You and I have had God the Father set His covenant love upon each one of us, and at this moment, we are being preserved, guarded, and kept by Jesus Christ. In this introduction, you see the work of God the Father, the work of God the Son, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in you and me, being who we are.

What?

What is the purpose of him writing to the called, the loved, and the kept? His purpose is clear. He said, "...although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation (that we have in Christ), I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

I can just picture myself being Jude, the half-brother of Jesus...and I had missed it! *I mean I grew up with Him and knew He was different, but I didn't believe He was the Messiah. The more I think back on it, I remember that He never got into trouble. Out of all of my brothers, He is the only one who never did anything wrong. I could get James in trouble, I could get Joseph in trouble, and I could get Simon into trouble. But no matter what I did to Jesus, I could never once get Him into trouble. He was a good brother! But there for a little while, I thought He had lost His mind. He went around telling everyone that He was actually the Messiah! So many times we would have to go rescue Him, trying to get Him to come back home. We thought He had lost His mind. Then I saw Him crucified... We tried to get Him to deny it, but He wouldn't. You see, I never believed in Him. But something happened. My brother didn't just go down, He got up, and when He did, it changed my life. The resurrection gave validity to His death, and His death gave validity to His life. That is what I really want to write to you about. I want to write to you about the*

salvation we have in my brother Jesus Christ, but there is something more important.

Did you hear that? As much as we, in the church, love to talk about the salvation we have in Christ, there is something even more important than that. And Jude said it is a need for us who are called, loved, and kept to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. The word, "*contend*," is where we get the English word, 'agony.' In the Greek, it has words on the end and at the beginning that intensify the meaning. Therefore, it is used in Greek society to picture someone who goes off on a military conquest. It is also used of someone who has dedicated himself to an athletic endeavor. This word came to mean 'to wrestle or fight.' In the Greek thought, it literally meant 'to give everything you've got.' What you are doing is being contested by someone else, and when the contest is over, the stronger will prevail. It is the picture of someone having something that someone else wants. So they take it, even though it is not rightfully theirs.

This happened last night at my house. I heard a commotion, turned, and saw my two youngest grandsons locked in combat. The common thing they had in their hands was a fishing net. Because Finley was the older one, I immediately told him to let go of it. Now, he is our obedient grandchild. But he didn't let go. He looked at me with that look that made me realize that he wasn't the problem. The youngest one, Garnet, was the problem. So I asked Finley if it was his, and he said, "Yes Papaw." He never let go. He knew it was his, and even though I spoke unjustly and told him to let go, he never let go. Garnet didn't either, but then he finally had to let go because it wasn't his. That is the picture.

Listen to me...something has been delivered to the church. There are folks, not outside the church, within the church, who want to take what has rightfully been given to the church away from us. The picture is you and I locked in a battle, and we are going to hold on to what we have been given with everything we've got, no matter how hard someone else tries to

pry it away from us. What are we holding onto? The faith, once for all, delivered to the saints. Faith here is not talking about someone's personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. That is not what he is talking about. Here, faith is being used as the body of beliefs, the body of teachings; everything we believe that is encompasses being a Christian. That is what the faith is. It has been delivered, once for all, to the saints.

This phrase, "once for all," talks about the factuality of the faith, the finality of the faith, and the fullness of the faith. Hear me...what the apostles heard from Jesus, what the Holy Spirit of God clarified, signified, and inspired these men to write in the New Testament, which has been handed to us, you and I cannot alter or change. It is the very Word of God. Did you hear me? It sets us apart from every other group of people on the planet.

We must be willing to contend, to put everything we've got into it, because the problem is that Jude isn't addressing a group of people outside the church, he is addressing a group of people inside the church. The contention starts right in our churches. It starts in our small groups. It starts in our one on one relationships we have with other people who claim to be part of the church. Are you up for a battle? I believe it is ok for the church to change its methods, but the church can never change the message. There is no problem with our message. The problem is with the culture in which we minister the message. The culture will try to get us to change the message. There will be many in the church who will believe that for the church to stay relevant, the church must change its message. I'm telling you we can't. I'm telling you we won't.

Why?

Why is it necessary for Jude to write this? Why is it necessary for me to have to talk about this? The reason is that certain people have crept in. This isn't talking about what is going on in government, Congress, or city hall. This is talking about what is going on in some small group Bible studies. This is talking about what is going on in some adult worship

services. This is talking about what is going on in relationships among the church! There are certain people who have crept in. It means they just wandered in unnoticed. You didn't take stock of them. And before you knew it, they were in a position of leadership and influencing the church in the wrong direction. They are almost like spiritual terrorists. They are willing to spend whatever time it takes to get in and look like everyone else, except they have never been called, they have never been loved, and they are not being kept by Jesus. The Bible calls them ungodly people.

Don't envision ungodly people all being like Hitler or Mussolini. No, in the flesh, many of them will look just like you, except their ways will not be of God. They will be non-God like. They have crept into the church because they want to change the grace of God into sensuality. They deny Jesus as the only Master and Lord. Did you hear that? Jude tells us the reason why we should watch and why we should contend is because there is a group of people within the church who are not of the church, and their desire is to influence the church to believe that you can do whatever you want to do in the name of salvation, and you can believe whatever you want to believe in the name of salvation. That is not true. They change the grace of God into sensuality. The grace of God is God's power for us to live a life where we don't sin! And yet there are people in the church who take the grace of God and actually use the grace to give people permission to sin! Don't listen to anyone who teaches you that salvation gives you a license to sin; it does not! The grace of God actually enables you to change from a sinner to a saint and to have the power of the Holy Spirit within you, to have a new nature of God and to live up to who you are, which is you being right with God! Amen!

You see, those people deny that Jesus is your only Master and Lord. They are not denying that Jesus plays a part in salvation, but they are denying that He is your Lord and Savior, the only One. Your life doesn't belong to you anymore; it belongs to God. But they are teaching that it is your choice, it is your life, and you can do with it what you want to do. No you cannot.

Jude gives three examples of people that God will judge, and already has judged:

1. Unbelieving Hebrews in the Exodus

The first example is the group of people that came out of Egypt but didn't really believe. God judged them and they didn't make it into the Promised Land. Please don't look at all the people who came out of Egypt as being saved, even though the New Testament uses that story as a symbol of our salvation. The writer of Hebrews is clear. A lot of people came out of Egypt, but they didn't all make it into the Promised Land.

Honestly, if there had been a parade leaving Egypt that day and I was a Jew in slavery to the Egyptians, I would have gotten in the parade too. It wouldn't have mattered where they were going, because anything would have been better than what they had. There are a lot of people who would get in on the parade. They would come out, but they were not really out, and they were never going to enter in. God has designed a life in the wilderness to prove the reality of who really knew Him. God will judge the people who don't really believe.

2. Fleeing Angels

He then gives the example of some angels who left their dwelling place. A lot of scholars believe this is a reference to Genesis chapter 6. But whatever these angels did, it was so bad that God has reserved them in judgment and they are held in chains at this very moment until they stand before God at the Day of Judgment.

3. Sexual Immorality

The third example Jude gives is example of Sodom and Gomorrah and all the cities around them. God destroyed them. Jude was careful to say the reason God destroyed them was because they were indulging in sexual immorality and unnatural desires. This means the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, by and large, were engrossed in sexual immortality and had

exchanged the natural use of their body for other bodies. This is talking about homosexuality. God judged an entire culture, and He wiped them out.

But Jude is not referring to the physical destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; he is referring to the eternal judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then he says in verse 8, "...*in like manner...*" In other words, he is following up what he just said about Sodom and Gomorrah and their sexual sin and homosexuality. He says that in like manner, these people who are now in the church are defiling the flesh, rejecting authority, and blaspheming the glorious ones (this is another repetition of three). Why are they doing this? Jude says it is because they are living by their own dreams. Here is a group of people whose standard of truth, whose standard of authority, is their own dream. They are just making it up. Whatever seems right for them; that is what they follow. As a result, they defile their flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

Then, Jude gives a strange analogy here. He quotes from a non-canonical book, the Assumption of Moses. He talks about when Moses died and Michael, the archangel, came to contend with the devil over the body of Moses. When Michael saw the devil guarding the body of Moses and trying to take it, Michael, who is one of the lead angels in Heaven, was respectful as he approached the devil. He didn't tell the devil what to do. He said, "The Lord rebuke you." That's strange, isn't it? What this is talking about are people who do not acknowledge the Word of God as the ultimate authority in their life. In other words, you live by what you believe is true and what makes sense to you. And then, it begins to make sense to you that since it is your flesh, you can do whatever you want to with it. You start rejecting the authority of God. You are your own authority. Before you know it, you don't even have a respect for spiritual beings. We are living in a day and age where that is happening.

In the next verse, he says that when it comes to things they don't understand, they use the same thing a wild animal uses - instinct. People

live by instinct. Jude tells us later that these people are also void of the Holy Spirit. They don't have the Holy Spirit in their life, so they are not believers and they lived instinctively.

We have a little dog, a border collie, on our farm that my wife named Angus. Border collies have an instinct to herd animals. My wife has cows, but she did not buy a border collie to herd cows. She bought this dog to be a pet, to be a companion, but the instinct of Angus is to herd. You should see him every morning. He has figured out my wife's morning pattern. He can't wait until she goes out the door, and the moment she does, he is right behind her and heads straight to the cattle pen. He is going to help her bring the cows to the barn, except he doesn't know how to get the cows to the barn. He just knows to herd the cows. He herds them in all kind of directions! He doesn't really know what to do, but he thinks he does, so by instinct, he runs the cows. The moment he takes off, she is calling for Angus to stop. He never stops. The more she says stop, the farther away he gets. The more she tells him to heel, the more he runs the cows. When she finally gets hold of him, gets him away from the cows, and releases him, he goes to herd her chickens. He has tried the goat a couple of times...that didn't work out to well for him...Just the other day, he tried to herd our three grandchildren! You could see him trying to get them all back together. But my wife has a surprise coming for him. Because she cannot control his instinct with her voice, she now has something lying on the counter charging; it is called a shock collar. It is the most powerful one we could find. Starting tomorrow, he is going to face the judgement of my wife when he tries to live by instinct!

There is a whole world of people who do not live their life based on the authority of God's Word, they base their lives on their instinct, on what feels right to them! Jude says by doing that, they are actually destroying themselves. We must understand that if we, in the church, don't stand for the faith, society will still convince a young girl that when she has sex for the wrong reason and gets pregnant, her instinct will tell her she doesn't want to face mom and dad. Instinct will tell her she doesn't want to raise a

child by herself, so it is ok to take the life of that child, not knowing what she will live with for the rest of her life. You and I also have to understand that there are people who instinctively have a flesh tendency towards same sex relationship, but no matter what culture says, the church cannot change its message! We don't live by what we feel; we live our life by the authority of God's Word. There has been a faith handed to us. And if you live your life outside that faith, one day there will be an eternal consequence to you! That is why we have to continue to tell the people in our churches to quit saying what you are saying on social media! It is pure gossip! It is a lie! I know you have a nature that feels like that is what you want to do, but it is wrong. I could go on and on.

Listen to me! We have to contend for the faith, because there is a group of people, even in the church, who are living by what they want to believe is true rather than living by what God clearly says in His Word. I am telling you that the day is coming when we, the church in America, will have to contend for the true faith of Jesus Christ. Whether we face jail time, the loss of our jobs, or losing our tax exemption, we will not bow down. Why must we contend for the faith? It is because sin is going to be judged, the sinner who is practicing that lifestyle is going to be judged and will eternally be separated from God forever, and we are their hope. The church is the hope, the light, the salt, that points people to the true remedy of their problem, and that is sin. We are not being mean here. We are being loving and kind as we stay faithful to the Word of God and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Some of these folks are in your small groups. Some of these folks are sitting in your pews. They have not been called, not been loved, and are not being preserved by Jesus. They are doing their own thing, believing there is not going to be a consequence, and it ultimately leads to doing what they want to do. They have crowned themselves Lord of their own lives. The Bible says these people are a hidden reef at a love feast. You see, when the early church got together and celebrated the Lord's Supper, it was somewhat like a Baptist potluck. Everyone brought something from

home, set it on the table, and during that potluck, they would take the bread and the cup and do the Lord's Supper, then they would continue eating and it would last all day long. The church looked forward to a day of worshipping and eating together. But the Bible says there are people among you who are hidden reefs. You are this great harbor and people can't wait to come in, but then they sit next to someone who is going to take the bottom out of their boat. They are like a shepherd who feeds himself. They are like waterless clouds. There are many times in a dry year that we see a cloud come up and we can't wait for rain, and the cloud passes without raining and we are all disgusted. We are let down. That is how these people are. They are like autumn trees that never give fruit. They are like those raging waves in the sea that just foam and create turmoil. They don't push you where you want to go; they just crash your ship.

Then he says they are like wandering stars. We navigate by GPS or Google, but in the biblical world they navigated by the stars. If you had a star that got off its course, it wouldn't take you where you wanted to go, it would lead you astray. These people lead others astray. The Bible says that one day, in the fulfillment of the prophecy of Enoch, the Lord will come with his ten thousands of ten thousands of Holy ones, and He will judge sinners. That is why you and I must contend for the faith.

How?

How do we contend for the faith? The book closes with verses 20-23 giving us four ways to contend with faith.

1. Build Your Faith

You build yourself up in your most holy faith. This little word, build, means that you literally get into the spiritual gym and you do the exercises necessary to get strong in the faith. Some of you are spiritual wimps when it comes to the faith of the church. You couldn't sit down with someone and share the spiritual plan of salvation with them if your life depended on

it. You could not answer a question about the doctrine of the security of the believer. You could not answer why the church believes baptism is by immersion for a believer only. You can't answer why we have bread and the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. You can't answer because you just don't think about it. We will go to a physical gym and take care of our physical body, but we will not take care of our spiritual body. How are you going to wrestle with the world? The world so believes what they believe, that if it takes the rest of their lives, they will do it. And we bail out after a few minutes because we have no spiritual stamina to stay in the battle. We don't get in the gym. We don't get in the Word. Build yourself up!

2. Pray in the Spirit

Then the Bible says pray in the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? I am asked that question a lot. Let me ask you this, what does it mean to walk in the Spirit? To walk in the Spirit means you walk under the control of the Holy Spirit. So when you pray, you are to pray under the control of the Holy Spirit. I wonder how your praying would change if you prayed according to the Holy Spirit, and according to what the Holy Spirit was urging you to pray for, rather than what you wanted. Wow! It would change your life.

3. Keep in God's Love

We guard ourselves in the love of God the Father. I have to be honest with you. This is tough, but necessary. If we are going to contend for the faith and if we are going to be locked into combat with people who don't believe what we believe, the tendency is to be fleshly.

I grew up wanting to be a basketball player for the University of Kentucky. That didn't happen. If you have been in any athletic endeavor or if you have been in the military, you know that to bring out your best, the people in charge of you tried to get you to hate for your opponent. You have to have a killer instinct. We have watched a team fail to put away another team, and we think they just don't have the killer instinct. That is of the

world; that is not how the church fights. We don't hate those we are battling. We don't hate the false teachers. We don't hate the people who believe the grace of God lets them do anything they want to do. We don't hate the people who think they can believe whatever they want the Bible to say. The reason is because while we are locked in this combat, we guard ourselves with the love of God the Father. We realize that if God loved us when we were sinners, and He did, then we are going to love other sinners too.

Now listen, you never have the right to question whether someone is called, loved, or kept by Jesus Christ. The very sinner you are battling, contending with now, may be someone that in five years God is going to bring to Himself. While God orchestrated me coming to Christ at 13, he may very well orchestrate someone else to come to Christ at 69. Amen! I hate what they are doing, but I still have a love for them. That is what is wrong with the church today. The world thinks we hate people who have abortions. The world thinks we hate people who go down the homosexual road. The world thinks we hate people who have been divorced. No we don't. We love people who have made wrong choices because we were a people who were making wrong choices. But for the grace of God go I!

4. Wait for Christ's Mercy

We wait for the mercy of Jesus Christ that is going to lead to eternal salvation. We wait! While we are contending, building ourselves up, praying in the Holy Spirit, guarding ourselves with the love of our Father, we wait, realizing it is not on our shoulders to win this battle! I am waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to arrive, just in time, with mercy. It is that mercy from Him that is ultimately going to lead to eternal life.

Be Merciful to the Doubtful

While I am waiting for God to bring mercy to me in this battle, who am supposed to be merciful to? I am supposed to be merciful to those who

have doubt. I'm supposed to be merciful to that one who I might could snatch out of the fire.

Some people get to close to the fire. We camped one weekend with our grandsons. I built a fire, and I can't tell you how many times the two year old got close to it and someone would have to grab him by the shoulder. He didn't know. He knows it is hot. He knows we told him not to get too close, but he really doesn't know, so we grabbed him.

Listen, God is going to use you to grab someone and snatch them out of the fire of false teaching because they really don't know. As a young pastor, I saw there were people I should have steered you away from, but I wouldn't because I always thought it was your choice, not anymore. I am going to tell you when I hear you talk about that man you follow on TV that you better watch it. He is not preaching the true gospel. I am going to warn some of you ladies about some of those Bible studies you do, because not all of those ladies are teaching the correct doctrine. I am going to warn you. It shouldn't just be me doing it as a pastor. You should do this for your friends. You should tell them they had better watch it, because they could get burned if they follow someone who teaches a false gospel. You can actually snatch someone from the fire of false teaching.

That is how we contend for the faith. We don't get in a fight, but we are ready when someone tries to take what has been given to us away from us and make it theirs when it isn't theirs. It can be theirs, but they have to accept it as it is. If they are willing to accept it as it is, they won't have to pry it out of our hands. We will gladly give it to them. Jesus gave it to the apostles. The apostles gave it to the church. A generation before us gave it to us. Please don't let this culture we live in take the gospel away from us. When it does, the church has no other meaning, or message, or purpose, but to be light and salt in the world in which we live in.

I believe this message of Jude came out of that positive relationship he had with Jesus and because he had truth. He knew Jesus. He could spot what was wrong. He knew many people were being misled. He knew why

it looked good, but they had to be warned. And he warned us. May we be a warning today to the culture around us, but let's make sure we, in the church, are taking care of business here. When we get it right here, then with a unified voice, we will be able to truly shine our light into the culture around us.