



“... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, ...” Jude 3.

Contending for the Faith

Lesson Aim: To encourage steadfastness in the faith.

L287. Date: September 1971. **Text:** Jude 1-4, 17-25.

Topic: Faith: Defense of.

INTRODUCTION - This lesson is written to **“... exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,”** Jude 3. This is the same admonition given by the Apostle Peter who wrote, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,”** I Peter 3:15.

The lesson text is taken from the little one-chapter Epistle of Jude. It was written because certain unprincipled men had come into the churches under the guise of being true Christians and were turning weak believers into error. This must be stopped. So the Holy Spirit used Jude to write this brief epistle. Herein is sounded a warning. Herein is issued a call to arms.

Just who was this Jude whom the Spirit used to write this Epistle? He identified himself as “the servant of Jesus Christ, and the brother of James.” He is one of the lesser known figures of the New Testament. This is surprising when it is remembered that he was an apostle of Jesus—one of the twelve. His name occurs only in lists of the apostles, in John 14:21-22, and in this epistle.

EXPOSITION

I. THE FAITH

The challenge of this lesson is that we should “earnestly contend for the

faith.” It is quite imperative, therefore, that we know what “the faith” really is. This term “faith” is widely used in the Bible. It has four identifiable meanings.

(1) James, alone of New Testament writers, uses faith in both noun and verb form to denote bare intellectual assent to the truth, James 2:14-26.

(2) The Old Testament sometimes uses the term in the sense of faithfulness, particularly in reference to God, and this usage is also found in the New Testament as well, Romans 3:3; Galatians 2:20.

(3) Paul, with other New Testament writers, uses the word to mean “unqualified acceptance of, and exclusive dependence on, the mediation of the Son as alone securing the saving mercy and grace of the Father.” This is how we use it when we speak of “saving faith.”

(4) Occasionally, “the faith” denotes the body of truth revealed and held by the Christian religion. Thus “the faith” means “the doctrines which we believe.” This is the usage in Jude 3 as well as Romans 1:5. Paul also uses it in Galatians 1:23, saying, “. . . **That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.**” Those who turn from the Christian way are said to depart from “the faith.” Concerning such occurrences the Holy Spirit warned believers long ago, I Timothy 4:1. The good minister of Jesus Christ is to see that his fellow believers are “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained,” I Timothy 4:6.

II. SOME ARE IN THE FAITH, 1-2.

1. Those who are in the faith are sanctified by God the Father, verse 1. By “sanctified” is meant that one is set apart in love as the special possession of God. Perhaps this is one reason the Apostle Jude calls himself “the servant (bondslave) of Jesus Christ.” He felt he was no longer his own; he had been bought with a price, I Corinthians 6:19-20.

2. Those who are in the faith are preserved, verse 1. To be “sanctified by the Father” is one side of the coin; to be “preserved in Jesus Christ” is the other.

Being in Christ Jesus, the believer is safe. So safe are we in His care that not one whom He has received will perish. Believers owe their preservation to Jesus. In Him they are “kept by the power of God,” I Peter 1:5. This term “kept” is a military term which pictures one under guard. Soldiers surround him to assure his safety.

3. Those who are in the faith are called, verse 1. Such a “calling” looks back over the believer's experience as he came to Jesus Christ. The Holy

Spirit spoke to the sinner's heart to make him aware of guilt and need for forgiveness. The sinner responded to the call of God in penitent faith. God accepted him and forgave him and sanctified him. This is the effectual calling of God.

III. ALL MUST DEFEND THE FAITH, 3-4.

1. The faith is defended by a united stand, verse 3. Believers are sharing a “common” salvation. This does not mean their salvation is low, coarse, unrefined. A “common” salvation is a salvation shared by all. We speak of a group of people having a common interest. So a group of believers in Jesus has a common salvation.

Since each one is saved by God's grace, a member of God's family, indwelt by God's Spirit, through faith in God's Son, he has a “common salvation” and unity marks their relationships each with the others. Personal differences of culture, education, race, etc., are nothing in the face of such unity in Christ.

2. The faith is defended through strenuous efforts, verse 3. Jude admonishes believers to “earnestly contend” for the faith. This expression is full of emotion. It refers to contestants in the Grecian athletic contests exerting utmost possible effort of the will, through nerve and muscle, to overthrow all competitors.” Is this the way you support the faith?

3. The faith is defended because it is uniquely important, verse 3. It is a “once-for-all-delivered faith.” This means it is ultimate revelation of God. It will not be surpassed until we see Him face to face. Even the Book in which that faith is set forth is final and complete. It admits neither additions nor subtractions. It is the most valuable and unique of all systems of truth.

And who “delivered” this faith? God Himself! Through the Holy Spirit, He used men to write the truth about Himself. No wonder it is a unique system of doctrines. How tragic, then, for Christians to permit apostates and unbelievers to handle it irreverently. How tragic for Christians to handle it carelessly. The faith must be defended.

IV. SOME ARE AGAINST THE FAITH, 17-19,

1. These opponents of the faith were foretold, verse 17. The apostles of the Lord Jesus warned of wolves in sheep's clothing which would arise. They are spoken of in Romans 16:18; II Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 4:14; Titus 1:10; II John 7; Revelation 18:23. And this is only a partial list.

The Apostle Paul warns, **“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived,”** II Timothy 3:13. With the approach of the end of the age this shall become increasingly evident. Being forewarned, we can be prepared. Thus we can be “set for the defence of the gospel,” Philippians 1:17.

2. These opponents of the faith are blasphemous scoffers, verse 18. This is a description of people who have cast off a respect for sacred things and scoff at the truth of God. John Calvin has described them best, “Scoffers are those who, being inebriated with a profane and impious contempt of God, rush headlong into a brutal contempt of the Divine Being, so that no fear nor reverence keeps them any longer within the limits of duty: as no dread of a future judgment exists in their hearts, so no hope of eternal life.”

Would believers surrender the field to such men? Definitely not! Against these, the faith must be defended.

3. These opponents of the faith are motivated by ungodly lusts, verse 18. Lust is an inordinate desire. It is usually applied in the area of morals but its meaning is much larger than that. From the soil of disrespect for God there arises the evil plants of unholy motives and evil ambitions which motivate sinful men. We must watch for opponents to the faith in every area of life. We want a pastor who is a man of God and true to His Word. That is right. We want Sunday school teachers who love Jesus and believe the Bible. That is excellent. And then many of us send our children away to secular colleges where atheists teach them and agnostics who seem to delight in destroying their faith. Is that proper?

V. LET US GO UP IN THE FAITH, 20-25.

1. We should build upon the faith, verse 20. Using the truth of the gospel as the foundation, the believer builds up into spiritual maturity and faithful service. The material which goes into this spiritual building may be gold and silver and precious stones or it may be wood and hay and stubble, I Corinthians 3:10-15. But we must take care what material we use for it will be tested by fire.

This spiritual growth is something that one does for himself—“building up yourselves on your most holy faith. . .” Christian brother, are you growing up on the faith once for all delivered unto the saints?

2. We should keep on praying: “praying in the Holy Ghost,” verse 20. To pray in the Spirit does not mean to pray in a manner unintelligible to the

mind. It means to pray in accord with the Holy Spirit. It means to pray prayers which He inspires. Such a prayer life will make for spiritual vitality.

No man will “earnestly contend for the faith” unless his prayer life is what it should be. But those who live a life of prayer will make significant contributions to the spread of the Gospel and the defense of the faith.

3. We should keep close to God, verse 21. To “keep yourselves in the love of God” means to keep so close to God that one is always conscious of His love. Such a love is not weak sentiment. It is aggressive and sure obedience to the will of the Father. **“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments,”** II John 6. He who does not keep close to God is indicating that he does not love nor obey God. To lose one’s consciousness of love to God, and assurance of God’s love to us, would be to suffer great defeat in contending for the faith.

4. We should be soul winners, verses 22-23. The faith is best defended as men are won to Jesus Christ and committed to keeping the faith. A determined and unceasing effort must be made to reclaim the wayward brethren and enlist new converts.

CONCLUSION—Real and true New Testament Christianity is being threatened today. The prevalence of liberal doctrines denying the truth, with their acceptance by many religious denominations, is alarming. The growth of atheism is amazing.

God wants His people to stand up today and earnestly contend for the faith. In the home, in the church, in all of life, there must be an unflinching allegiance to the doctrine of Christ. Will you pledge to Him to be one of the faithful?

How can we contend for the faith? (1) Know what the truth is. (2) Be able to share it with others. (3) Teach it to your own family and loved ones. (4) Share it in personal conversation with others whether they are Christians or non-Christians. (5) Resolve to hold the truth whether any other person in the world does so or not.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” Ephesians 6:10.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Jude?
2. What is the theme of his Epistle?
3. What is “the faith”?

4. How can you “earnestly contend” for it?
5. Why do some oppose the faith?
6. In what ways is the faith opposed?
7. What can you do personally to defend the faith?
8. What can your church do that she is not now doing to defend the faith?
9. What do verses 24-25 mean to you?
10. How has this study profited you personally?