



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

Contend for the Faith

Lesson Aim: To encourage believers to prepare themselves to set forth the doctrines of the Christian faith

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Topic: Apostasy; Doctrine: Heresies in.

It must have been very difficult for the half-brothers of Jesus to accept Him as Messiah and Savior. There were two of them, however, who did so. James the Less (or, James the Just as he was sometimes called) and Jude were sons of Joseph and Mary, half-brothers of Jesus, and disciples of the Lord. James was prominent among the Christians in Jerusalem. He was pastor of the church there and moderator of the famous Jerusalem Conference discussed in Acts 15.

Jude is lesser known; however, he wrote an epistle which is a classic in exhorting believers to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints,” verse 3. The half-brother of Jesus has an important message for you in today's lesson.

A call to “contend for the faith” is needed today. At a time when it is popular, even stylish, to be a Christian, there is danger that the principles of the faith will be compromised for the sake of acceptance. True faith is being challenged today as seldom before in human history. That calls the Christian to watchfulness. Each believer should study the lesson with awareness that God, through the epistle of Jude, is calling him . . . to stand firm for the principles of revealed truth.

“... 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.

I. ENTERING THE FAITH (1, 2)

God takes the initiative in the salvation of sinners. No man can be saved when he chooses; he must come when God calls him. Jude used three terms to describe those who are “in the faith.” They are “sanctified” by God the Father, “preserved” in Jesus Christ, and “called.” God calls, preserves and sanctifies those whom He saves.

A. Sanctification — How does God sanctify sinners? He recreates them anew, by the spiritual birth, and gives them divine life in Jesus Christ. They are “sanctified” in that they are set apart unto Him and share His holiness. Sanctification does not refer to a special work of grace apart from salvation, but to the cleansing of the Holy Spirit by which the penitent, trusting sinner becomes a child of God and a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Who sanctifies sinners? Jude made it clear that they are “sanctified by God the Father.” Because He delights in His born again children, God claims them as His peculiar people and places His divine nature within them. Each Christian is one of those who are “sanctified by God the Father through Jesus Christ.”

B. Preservation — Not only is each Christian “sanctified in God the Father,” he is also “preserved in Jesus Christ.” That is the basis of the doctrine of the security of the believer. Apart from divine preservation of the saints, no one could be sure of heaven. God is the Father and Jesus is the Guardian of believers. Behold the wonder of redemptive grace!

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us?” Romans 8:31. God is “for” the security of each believer. He has given eternal life (John 3:16) so the believer will never perish (John 5:24) so as to ever be separated from God (Romans 8:35-39). The believer is sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30), kept in the hand of God (John 10:27-29) and preserved by His power (I Peter 1:5). You are secure, O Christian. Rejoice!

C. Effective call — The Christian has been called in such a way as to bring response on his part. No man can come to Jesus unless he is drawn by the Father (John 6:44) and born of the Spirit. Each believer has been called. Because of that call, he is a child of God.

There is a three-fold privilege of the Christian. God has claimed him by calling him to partake of the gospel; has regenerated him by the Spirit into newness of life; has preserved him in Christ so that he will never lose his salvation. That is one's blessing as a Christian.

Being a believer, the Christian has received God's mercy, peace and

love (verse 2). Those are the choicest blessings possible for one to receive. As the believer grows up in Christ he will more and more experience and understand the blessings of that triad of graces. Salvation is the beginning, not the climax, of Christian experience. Those increasing blessings await all who are “in the faith.”

II. DEFENDING THE FAITH (3, 4)

A. United defense: “. . . ye should earnestly contend for the faith . . .” All Christians share a common (mutual) salvation. Each is saved in the same way, by the same Lord, to the same inheritance. They are united in a holy brotherhood as members of the family of God. Those common relationships produce common interests. Joined in so many mutual areas, each should be committed to unite with the others in defense of the faith.

B. Determined defense: “. . . earnestly contend for the faith . . .” The term, “earnestly contend,” is used nowhere else in the New Testament. In secular usage it referred to the athletic contests in Greece in which each participant would exert his utmost effort to win at a competitive sport. It is even found to contain the concept of “agonize in order to win.” One may imagine the athlete's putting forth the utmost possible efforts of will, nerve and muscle to overthrow or outdistance all competitors. Just so are Christians to stand by the faith. When it is attacked, they should put forth utmost effort to defend it and to propagate it.

Why is it important to defend “the faith”? It is a “once-for-all-delivered faith.” It is complete, eternally complete, being delivered by God Himself. The Christian should never be ashamed of it. He should never let Satan's attack of it go unchallenged. A Christian shows his true colors by his willingness to stand up for the faith in the face of denial or doubt by others.

C. Forewarned defense: “. . . certain men crept in unawares . . .” verse 4. God warned in ancient times that the faith (doctrines) of Jesus Christ would be denied by some and attacked by others. To be forewarned should cause Christians to be forearmed. Evil men will sometimes try to enter the Christian fold by indirect and deceitful methods. By sly insinuations of doubt, or by outright denial of fact, they attack the faith. The Christian should not be deceived. God warned that such times would come; He called for Christians to be ready to defend the faith.

If Satan's errors are not met with defense, the doctrines of grace will be perverted so as to lead men into corrupt and carnal beliefs and practices. Men will think they should continue in sin that grace may abound (Romans

6:1). Error will lead to greater error until finally there will be a denial of the Lord Jesus. The Christian should meet Satan's assault with assured proclamation of the faith.

III. DENYING THE FAITH (17-19)

Who would deny the faith of Jesus Christ? Who would dare reject Bible teachings or pervert Bible truths? Jude carefully described those enemies of truth.

A. Mockers (verses 17,18) — “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. “ One meets the “mockers” today when he hears people speak without fear of God and reject the doctrines of true religion. Against those, the faith must be defended.

B. Lustful (verse 18) — Passion to have pre-eminence, to be considered great religious leaders, and to gain the vain praise of men marks those who deny the truth of God.

C. Unspiritual (verse 19) — Only those who have known the regenerating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit are spiritually minded. Others are natural men, not spiritual men. Only spiritual men can understand the things of God for only they are taught by the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 2:14. All others are but blind leaders of the blind (Matthew 15:14).

IV. PROPAGATING THE FAITH (20-25)

The Christian should keep on growing in grace, building himself up in the most holy faith (II Peter 3:18). There is no way to have vitality in religion other than to keep on growing in the Lord (Jude 20).

A life of prayer is essential to spiritual growth (Jude 20). The Holy Spirit is available to help the Christian pray (Romans 8:26). Only the prayer that is inspired, toned, and directed by the Holy Spirit will have power.

The best way to defend the faith is to declare it. The Bible does not need defending as much as it needs declaring. It is “the sword of the Spirit.” Declared plainly and continually, it will provide its own defense. It is the power (dynamite!) of God unto salvation to all who believe. Christians are to give their time and effort to spreading abroad the doctrines set forth in the Holy Bible.

The message is to be spread. It is too good to keep. It is too urgently

needed to be kept. God has commanded that it be brought into the hearing of every human being. Let the preachers proclaim it. Let the missionaries spread it. Let the believers testify of it. Share the good news.

Jude warned of the enemies of the faith. He encouraged Christians to stand fast in the faith. He promised God's keeping power over all who are in the faith. The mention of God's grace in the preservation of the saints, however, inspires a doxology of praise: **“To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”** The hearts of God's redeemed saints rise up in adoration of the Father and His blessed Son, Jesus Christ, and reply with a joyous, “Amen!”

You are honored with the opportunity to spread the faith of the New Testament. It is being challenged today. It needs men and women who are committed to declaring it today. Be one of God's faithful warriors of the faith. **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,”** Ephesians 6:10.

Questions

1. What is the theme of the epistle of Jude?
2. What is “the faith”?
3. How can you earnestly contend for the faith?
4. Why do some oppose the faith?
5. How can you identify an enemy of the faith?
6. How can your church more effectively defend the faith?
7. How is proclaiming the faith a way to defend it?
8. What do you see in verses 24, 25?
9. How has the lesson profited you?