

SPIRITUAL SAFEGUARDS

Jude 20-25

Intro: Jude began his letter with an exhortation; now he concludes it with several others.

The one with which he began is found in verse 3. They were to "contend for the faith," and this was to be done "earnestly."

To contend means that they were to do at least two things:

- 1) They were to hold on to something which others were trying to take away from them.
- 2) They were to defend, support, maintain, dispute -- in short, do all within their power to convince the false teachers and anyone affected by false teaching that the Word of God is true.

A large part of this contention was to warn false teachers and anyone who was inclined to embrace their teaching of the consequences of those who had gone in that direction throughout history.

The warning is concluded with a second exhortation found in verses 17-19 -- the words of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was the equivalent of appealing to the words of the Lord Himself.

Now we come to the final part -- special exhortations for those who contend. They, too, are in danger because there is always the possibility that we can be pulled under by those we oppose. A lifeguard whose business it is to pull others out of the water can be drowned himself. The instructor in mountain climbing can himself perish on the mountains. The man who works to find an answer or remedy to some disease can be infected with the disease. The soldier who trains others in military science can himself die in battle.

So the child of God who stands against error and sin can himself be overtaken by the error and the sin which he opposes.

Illus: A seminary friend of mine who first pointed out 2 Cor. 5:9 to me. Later he accepted a job teaching in a well-known eastern university to reach college students. Today he apparently no longer believes that the Bible is the Word of God.

Jude's SPIRITUAL SAFEGUARDS are divided into three parts:

- 1) Those that have to do with the contenders themselves -- what they need to be doing constantly to protect themselves.
- 2) The second has to do with the way in which people are treated who have fallen prey to false teaching and the sin which always accompanies it.
- 3) The final part has to do with God -- not something for us to

do, but something for us to know, and to put our trust in.

Let us look at the first -- and these apply to every one of us here. Whether we like it or not, we are in a battle -- and the risks of injury to ourselves are high! Note carefully what Jude says that

I. THE CONTENTDERS ARE TO DO FOR THEMSELVES (Jude 20, 21).

Let me explain what I mean when I say that we must do these things for ourselves.

A child of God never does anything of a spiritual nature for himself without the blessing of God. Phil. 2:13 always applies. So does 1 Thess. 5:24. BUT we are involved in what God does in that He does not do it for us, but in us, and through us. Remember John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing!"

Remembering this, note that:

- 1) "Building up . . ." is a participle.
- 2) "Praying . . ." is a participle.
- 3) "Looking . . ." is a participle.

The main verb is "keep yourselves in the love of God." This is the main thing that we have to do. And since it comes third, the first two participles describe how it is possible for us to "keep ourselves in the love of God," and the third participle, "looking," shows what will be the result of those first three statements.

Now all that remains is to find out what each of them means.

A. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (v. 20).

First of all, look at the nature of the truth that we have, and let this set it apart from all other teaching. It is our "most holy faith." It is the truth of God, not the word of men. Cf. 1 Thess. 2:13.

This is "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v. 3b).

Jude means that it is not enough for us to coast along on what we have known; we must continue to learn, continue to see the truth more clearly, continue that we may learn truths and see aspects of truth that we have not known before.

A contending Christian has to be a growing Christian.

How do we do this? See 1 Tim. 4:13, 15, and 16.

We need to be reading Scripture, studying Scripture, reading good books about Scripture, discussing it with others, meditating on it, giving ourselves to it. And this must never stop!

Secondly,

B. "Praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20b).

The fact that this follows what Jude has to say about the Word gives us an idea of what this means.

See the same relationship between the Word and prayer in Eph. 6:10-18.

Two things are involved here:

1. Our praying must be under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

He must help us and lead us when we pray.

2. Our praying must be in agreement with the Word of God. We are to turn the truth that we learn into prayer -- worshipping, praising, pleading, interceding, confessing.

The contender who does not spend more time in prayer than he does in contending will eventually fail. The greater the dangers from error and sin, the more we should pray -- and pray in the Holy Spirit.

But what does this lead to?

C. "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21a).

If I am right in saying that Jude was an apostle of our Lord Jesus, then he was in the Upper Room when our Lord spoke about this very thing.

Please turn to John 14:21, 23.

To keep ourselves in the love of God means to live in such a way that we can continually have the blessing of God, and that comes only through OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD.

This is where we all fail. We know more truth than we are putting into practice. And this is where many a child of God has fallen before the enemy.

Finally,

D. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto

eternal life" (Jude 21b).

This indicates what our hope will be if we do the other three, but it also indicates how long we have to do the other three -- until the Lord comes!

Remember, too, that mercy has to do with our misery -- and that is what we have in this world in our conflict with error and immorality.

If we have been negligent in any or all of these things, let us ask the Lord for help in starting to do them right away.

The second thing in our text by way of SPIRITUAL SAFEGUARDS has to do with

II. THE WAY WE DEAL WITH OTHERS (Jude 22, 23).

I see no reason to change from the KJV to the more complicated and less clear ideas expressed from some Greek MSS, and found in both the NASB and the NIV.

Jude indicates that in general we will be dealing with two kinds of people -- those who want help, and those who do not. So we must use two kinds of methods -- and you find both of these in Scripture: the gentle method, and the severe. Note how the Lord employed both of these.