

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1-25

Intro: There are four one-chapter epistles in the NT. There is only one in the OT: the prophecy of Obadiah. We have already considered three of the NT epistles: 2 John, 3 John, and Paul's epistle to Philemon. This morning I want to consider the epistle of Jude. The Lord willing, I plan to teach the prophecy of Obadiah when we get back from a week at the beach.

I am repeating what we have done for the benefit of those who may not have gotten in on this present series.

I have alternated in my thinking about dealing with this whole epistle in detail, or touching upon the main themes and giving a survey. I finally decided on a combination . I want us to focus on Jude's main purpose in writing, his several illustrations from Scripture which showed the need for such a purpose, and then what those to whom he was writing needed to do to fulfil that purpose. But first let us look at verse 1 where we see who the writer is, those to whom he was writing, and then his prayer for them in verse 2 as a part of his greeting.

We don't know to whom wrote his epistle which appears in our Bibles just before the book of the Revelation. But it was written before either of John's epistles, probably late in the 60's after Christ. The writer simply identifies himself as "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." A big question is, Who was he?

In Matthew 13, beginning with verse 54 we find these words concerning our Lord Jesus Christ:

54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? (Matt. 13:54-56).

After the Lord Jesus' birth His mother Mary gave birth to four more sons and several daughters who are not named in the Bible. Assuming that these sons are named in the order in which they were born, the oldest was James, who wrote the epistle of James in our Bibles, and the fourth was

Judas, or Jude. And it is thought that this Judas, or Jude, was the writer of the epistle we are going to be looking at this morning.

As far as we know none of our Lord's half brothers were even saved while the Lord was here on earth, but afterwards it is very likely that all of them trusted in their elder Brother and were saved. But it is especially significant that neither James nor Jude identified himself as *a brother of Jesus Christ*, or even as *a half-brother of Jesus Christ*. James identified himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, while Jude identified himself in the letter before us today as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." And in both cases these half-brothers of our Lord use the word for "servant" which means *a bondservant*, or actually *a slave*. It shows their deep humility and their unconditional commitment to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no attempt on the part of either of these men to take advantage of their blood relationship with the Lord Jesus. They gloried in being able to identify themselves as bond-servants, as slaves, wholly committed to do the will of their Lord.

(Refer to Dr. John MacArthur's book entitled, "Slave," where he goes into the meaning that word "slave" as it relates to all of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.)

Jude put the Lord first, and then spoke of his relationship to his older brother, James.

To whom was he writing? See the second half of verse 1. "Sanctified" (some of your Bibles may say, "Beloved"), "preserved in Christ Jesus, and called."

Then in verse 2 he gave them the normal kind of a Christian greeting which was characteristic of those early days in the Church: "Mercy . . . peace . . . love, be multiplied." Not just what they had then, but what they could expect in the future to be multiplied to them.

Jude is not slow about telling them why he was writing to them. We have this in verse 3. Perhaps some of you have heard Dr. Lewis Johnson's message on Jude which he entitled something like this: "The Letter Jude Didn't Intend to Write."

He had wanted to write to them about their "common salvation," but circumstances and the prevailing work of the Spirit constrained him to

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write about a very important matter which he had to write about. See verse 3. (Read.) He wanted them to know that they were involved in a struggle, even a warfare, which evidently had increased in its intensity at the time. And it was aimed at one thing: “the faith.”

Do you remember what the Devil’s first words to Eve were? His first words were an attack upon the Word of God. He said to her, “Yea, hath God said . . . ? His primary attack on the human family was an attack upon the Word of God. And he has been doing that ever since. He raises doubts in people’s minds about the truthfulness of the Word of God. One of his latest tactics is to question if Adam and Eve were real people. We as the people of God have to be prepared for such attacks against “the faith.” And we need to be prepared to stand against what the Devil and his present-day combatants are saying in opposition to the Bible. Jude was calling every believer in every generation down to the present to be prepared to contend for the faith, the truth which is the Word of God.

What specifically was being done in those early days. There were men whom were just as ordained for condemnation, eternal judgment as we believers have been chosen and ordained for eternal life, who were using “grace” as a reason to pursue sin to the limit. This is what lasciviousness is. It is to be morally unrestrained. It is to disregard all standards of moral behavior. It is what is often expressed today when people say that they don’t want anybody else telling them what they can do, or can’t do.

But you can’t deny the faith without denying the God of the Bible and His Son “our Lord Jesus Christ.” It begins by questioning the authority of God over us, and ultimate leads to claims of atheism. The Bible lets us see where the ungodliness of false teachers ultimately leads.

Jude is warning us of how small beginnings can lead to tragic endings. People will start out with what they feel are small departures from the truth not realizing where it leads. Think of what resulted from what the Devil encouraged Eve to do, and then what Adam agreed to do also.

In verse 5 Jude reminded his readers of what happened to thousands of Jews who escaped Egypt, but were dragged down to death because of their sin.

In verse 6 Jude and the Spirit of God remind us of what happened to the angels who followed the Devil’s lead.

In verse 7 we are reminded of a sin that has become so common in our country that it is finding acceptance even with people who don't practice it – homosexuality. Don't think for a moment that God does not see what is going on. And those who practice this need to be warned that God judged thousands of people at one time for this very thing. What does God think of same sex marriage? Read Genesis 18 and 19.

In Psalm 19 where King David spoke of the glory and greatness of the Word of God, he said this:

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward (Psa. 19:10-11).

The fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plane was intended to be a picture of the eternal punishment of hell that awaits those who reject the truth of the Word of God. But in spite of the warning people today are doing like has been done many times in the past in violation of the Word of God.

One of the greatest tragedies of our day is that our children are not being taught the stories of the Bible. The book of Jude in referring to many OT incidents would be like reading something in an unknown language even to most adults today. The Bible is not being taught in many churches. And so most people today have no exposure to the truth of God's Word. After the Apostle Paul had spoken of various experiences of the Jews in the OT, he concluded by saying this:

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

Parents, read the Bible to your children. Tell them the stories of the Bible. They are not always going to have you to tell them right from wrong, but if they have the Word of God in their hearts, God Himself will lead them and keep them from sin and all of the unhappiness it brings.

Now let me summarize, and I will let you pick up the details.

In verses 8 through 10 we learn that sin makes us think that there is nothing sacred. Our prisons are so full today that many states are facing

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bankruptcy taking care of them. This is mainly due to our doing away with the Bible in our homes and in our schools, and often in our churches.

Look at verse 11. Do you know what was sinful about Cain's way? Do you know what Balaam's error was? Do you know what gainsaying is, and what Core, or Korah, had to do with it, and what happened to him? Let's get back to our Bibles. They are invaluable in pointing out God's way for us to live.

Verses 12 and 13 give us God's description of false teachers. And let me remind all of us that the only way we can detect false teaching is by knowing the truth. And the only way we can know the truth is by reading the Bible, or having someone else read it to us. So often the stories speak for themselves.

Jude reminds us in verses 14 and 15 that the Lord is coming again, and that when He does He is going to execute judgment. Courts and judges and lawyers spend millions of dollars trying to find out who is guilty and who is innocent. The Lord is not going to spend a penny. He knows everyone. He knows all about those who are hiding their sins because nothing can be hidden from Him.

When we come to verse 17 we come to the second of three times that Jude said, "Beloved." He was writing in such strong language because he loved the Lord's people. He wanted to help them. He wanted to see God's blessing upon them.

But do you see what he told them to do? He told them what he wanted them to remember. We don't have a verb in English like *member*, but there is such a word in Latin. The verb is *memorare* which is what you are doing when you hear something, or read something, or are told something. And then they put a *re-* on the front of it which is what you do when you *re-member* something. You are calling back from you mind what you have *membered* before. Now you can't remember what you haven't learned. That is why it is so important for us as Christians to be reading our Bibles. Do you remember that the apostles warned us in the Bible that there would be false teachers in the last time? That is, that there would always be false teachers. That is something very important for all of us to re-member. Now if that is not in your memory, then you should do what? You should read the letters of the apostles in the NT.

All through the Bible (which means that all through history up to and including the time immediately following the Apostle John, we are warned against false teachers. So you can be sure that there are plenty of them around today. In fact, it is probably easier to hear what is false today than it is to hear what is truth.

So, what should we do? Jude tells us four things that all of us need to do all of the time. And you will find all of these in verses 20 and 21. Let me emphasize each one for you.

#1 – “Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” Obviously this is not the main verb in these two verses which form one sentence. But it leads to the main things. To build yourself up on your most holy faith means that you need to feed the Word of God into your mind and heart as regularly as you put food into your body. Read it to learn. Listen carefully when others are reading it. Learn the stories of the Bible. Get acquainted with the people you read about in the Bible, especially God and the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But also Adam and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Moses and all of the other wonderful people you will meet in the Bible. Build yourself up with the Word of God.

#2 – “Praying in the Holy Spirit.” We need to be praying while we are building ourselves up. Why? Well, because as you will learn from your Bible the Holy Spirit has been given to you if you are a Christian, a true Christian, to be your Teacher. And one important thing He does for us is to teach us to pray. We hear so little these days about the Holy Spirit and prayer. The place to learn is in your Bible. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible. He taught the writers to write what they wrote. So He really knows what it means. You and I will never learn it all, but we need to keep learning. And He specializes in teaching us to pray. In fact, if you are not praying, you may not be a Christian. Christians pray.

#3 – “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Now Jude did not mean that we are to keep God loving us, but that we are to keep ourselves where we can enjoy the fact that God loves us. Years ago after Lucille and I were married we discovered a couple of verses in the Gospel of John that really changed our lives, and it had to do with keeping ourselves in the love of God. Please turn with me to John, chapter 14. And when you get to John 14, let your eye run down to verse 21, and this is what you will read:

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that

loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Now keep your place in John 14 and let me read to you the next two verses where in verse 23 we will find essentially the same words that are in verse 21. In verse 22 we read:

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

And then the Lord said to Judas:

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

How do we keep ourselves in the love of God, which means really enjoying our fellowship with Him? It is by living day by day the way the Lord wants us to live, obeying His commandments because we love Him.

As we read our Bible we need to pay special attention to what the Lord wants us to do, AND to what He does not want us to do.

#4 – “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Remember that Jude mentioned “mercy” in verse 2. All the time we are living here on earth, faced with false teachers and their teaching, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit as we learn to pray, and seeking to please the Lord by our obedience to His Word, we need to be looking for the return of our Lord “unto eternal life.” The Lord Jesus is looking forward to having us all with Him in heaven, and we need to be looking for Him because He is coming – and maybe it will be today.

But while we are waiting, let us seek to help others to get ready for that great day. That is what we have in verses 22 and 23.

And then Jude, the half brother of our Lord, but using the title he preferred, “a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, gives us his prayer to God for us in verses 24 and 25. (Read.)