

Contend for the Faith

by Fred DeRuvo – Study-Grow-Know Ministries

Once Jude explained what he had originally intended to write, but that he then was moved to deal with another issue, he is off and running, wasting no time in explaining what these apostates do to gain the trust of those within a congregation.

He first warns his readers that above all things, it is important to “contend for the faith.” This means a form of apologetics, but Jude is not talking about *debate*. He is taking about presenting the gospel clearly and in no uncertain terms. If someone in the congregation begins using unfamiliar language with reference to the gospel of Jesus, they should be gently questioned in order to determine their real intent.

We know that members of cults work like this, often employing the exact same terms Christians use, yet their meaning is far different from the orthodox meaning. Once we get down to brass tacks and find the meaning that the other individual is applying to his verbiage, the problem can then be tackled with Scripture.

If the person argues against the truth of Scripture, then he needs to be gently warned. If he insists that he is correct, but is not, then he needs to be put out of that congregation. To allow him to remain, he will simply become a poison that will spread through the entire congregation because of his unwillingness to learn and understand the truth of Scripture.

Striving earnestly for the faith means to *defend* it. Do you know *what* you believe and *why* you believe it? If you don't, then you might unknowingly and unwillingly become party to error. As a Christian, it is not good enough to say “I am saved,” and that's it. Salvation is the *beginning*, and our growth *starts* at that point. We will spend the remainder of our lives learning more about God, who He is, and what He is accomplishing in and through us.

If you can look back on your life since becoming a Christian and not notice any real difference between the way you are now and the way you were a few years ago, something is wrong. That something has to do with you and your lack of growth. You haven't grown because you have not studied His Word and you have not spent time in prayer, seeking His will for your life. It's that simple, and it is the number one reason that people get sidetracked by others. It is because they do not know His Word, and therefore do not know Him all that well.

The apostate can easily take advantage of a person in such a condition because that apostate may know a few verses here and there and have the ability to skew Scripture so that they sound like what they are preaching or teaching is correct, but is not. People

listening to him may easily fall victim to the apostate because they have no ability to defend the faith, since they really don't know what the faith *is*, according to Scripture.

Stealthy

After Jude declares that our Christian faith needs to be defended at all costs, he explains is that these apostates are extremely *stealthy*. He says that they “crept in *unnoticed*.” This is important to understand. How could this have happened?

Unfortunately, in many congregations, as the individual congregants come to know one another, they tend to become *relaxed* and even *comfortable* in their relationships because they believe that they truly do *know* the other people. This creates an informal attitude toward others and engenders joy within the fellowship. Outsiders coming in realize that they get along and their resistance to newcomers lessens because of it.

Apostates look for this type of situation in a church. They know that if the congregation gets along and openly accepts newcomers *without* a critical eye, they have an excellent chance of slipping in unnoticed, and after some time will be able to woo many within the congregation over to their way of thinking. It happens all the time in churches today.

I know one man who stated he was a Jewish believer. He did not like to say he was a Jewish *Christian*, or even that he was a *Christian*. He was Jewish and wanted to be known as Jewish. When he went to church, he wore the Jewish prayer shawl and *Yarmulke* (pronounced *ya-ma-ka*). He also stood during prayer with his hands raised to the ceiling. Of course, because of it, this man was noticed, and people began to be attracted to him. He wasted no time in opening the Scriptures to them. He was very soft-spoken and had an air of authority. He also had no difficulty in disagreeing with someone when they said something that he considered to be wrong, and he did so in a way that was not necessarily an affront to others.

As it turned out, this particular individual made it a habit to go around to different Christian churches so that he could *gather* people to himself. He would then form his own Bible study groups and those people would begin to support him through donations (he had formed a non-profit for himself).

As you can imagine, because his actions were done without the knowledge or consent of the leaders of these churches, it became a problem when discovered. This man often taught things that were against the teachings of the particular church from which he gathered people. People were to call him “rabbi” or women were to call him “lord.”

One church was forced to call him and explain to him that before he came back (he was a somewhat regular attender), he would have to speak with the Elders to explain his actions. He never went back.

The people that he had gathered from that church were also contacted and told that they had to choose one or the other, to follow that man or continue to associate with the church. It is easy to see why the Elders made this very wise choice. While it sounds like an ultimatum (and it is), the reality is that because that man was teaching things that went against what the church those folks belonged to taught, problems would arise in short order.

Eventually, the man left the state after indicating that he had been called to a Jewish Messianic congregation in the eastern part of the United States. After he left, things went back to a sense of normalcy.

It is very easy to see how this could happen. For one thing, as noted, people today do not read their Bibles, nor do they study it. They depend on the pastor or some other leader or teacher to expound the Scriptures on Sundays and they think that's all they need. Of course that is untrue. We cannot *ever* get enough of God's Word, and needless to say, the more we *know*, the more we *grow*. The more we grow, the less likely we are to fall prey to some apostate wandering through our congregation. This was Jude's main concern, placed on his heart by the Holy Spirit.

Marked Out

Jude also says that these individuals are not only crafty and clever in the way they *infiltrate* a congregation, but they have been marked out long ago for condemnation. In other words, the leaders in the congregation should not hesitate to deal with them firmly if need be, since the apostates are ultimately objects of wrath. It is more important to ensure the safety and solidity of the congregation than to allow someone who lives by *SELF* to thwart God's purposes.

We can see this in action several times throughout the New Testament. Of course, we also note that God dealt with the matter often in the Old with respect to the unbelievers in Israel.

In the book of Acts, chapter five, we learn of a situation in which two people, Ananias and Sapphira, wound up lying to the Holy Spirit. They had sold land and brought the money to the apostles (Peter) so that it could be used to help those in need within the church. Unfortunately for these two, they had gotten together and decided that they would only give *part* of the money they had earned after selling their land to the church, but would still say that they were giving the *whole* amount.

When they gave their money to Peter, the Holy Spirit enlightened Peter so that he knew their plan and was prompted to ask them if the money they were giving was the total they received for the sale of their property. Ananias answered that it was (Sapphira was not with him at that moment). Peter asked Ananias why he thought it was fine to lie to the

Holy Spirit. Peter clarified for Ananias that ultimately, he had lied to God, not him (Peter). At that very moment, Ananias fell dead.

That is our show for today. We will continue with our series on Jude next time so I hope you'll join me then.

Until we meet again though, I pray that the Lord will open your eyes to show you how blessed you are in Him!