
Why Fight for Truth

Jude

Why fight for truth? This is an important question today. In our day and culture, that there is a truth (in fact, the truth) to be fought for, is really the question. But even among evangelicals, this becomes an important point. Why should we *fight* for truth? We can announce what we believe the truth to be. We can organize ourselves around these truths. We can even try to explain them in a way that attempts to draw others to believe them. But we must never, never say that this is the truth and we must never, never enter into the kind of confrontation that ends with saying, "If you do not believe these truths, you are not in the Body of Christ, the fellowship of the church."

Brother and sisters, all is not well among God's people. This pandemic season has been a hard time. But this is not my concern now. My concern is for the errors and false doctrine that is sweeping into the church. We have been preaching this series on *What the Bible Says About...* Partially to address some of these issues. We are getting ready to take up the book of Amos. Why? Why would we preach that book at this time? Because we need to fight for truth against a dangerous and divisive error. This is the error of Christian Social Justice.

We will engage this error with truth. We will stand for what is true and what is right. We are thinking about several fronts: this message on why it is necessary, a statement on the issue adapted from others and finally an exposition of Amos. Why Amos? Because it is grossly misused to just baptize a social Marxism and antiracism. In all of this we commend to you the outstanding book, *Fault Lines* by Dr. Voddie Baucham.

So, there may well be a price to be paid for fighting for the truth. Dr. Mohler, who was used by God to rescue the Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, from liberalism, preached a message to the assembled regents, trustees, staff and teachers entitled, "Don't Do Something, Just Stand There."

Since we are about to do this, I want to think together about both the *demand* and the *danger* in fighting for truth. Though the Bible is filled with texts aimed at this issue, I would like for us to settle on the book of Jude. And I have carefully chosen to do this on a morning set aside for the Lord's Table. I want us, in being convinced that confrontation over truth is necessary, to continue to delight in the communion in the truths we hold dear.

My aim is not to attempt *an exposition* of Jude, but rather *an observation* of how Jude approaches the necessity for contending for the faith. Partly, this means that I will hardly deal with the *particulars* of what the church was facing and aim at the *principles* that informed, motivated and governed Jude's appeal to contend..

The Grave Danger in It**(v.1-4)**

There are two great dangers in the midst of controversy. I want to briefly point to one and draw out the other from one of my favorite authors.

The Danger to Ourselves**(v.1-2)**

In this first paragraph, the danger in controversy is anticipated. How God's servants will need mercy, peace and love multiplied to them in the midst of controversy.

¹ Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

There is the danger that we will stop seeing ourselves merely as the servants of God and will begin to think of ourselves as the champions of God. So we lose the sweet fragrance of brokenness, humbleness and graciousness.

There is the danger that we will assume that because we are fighting for the truth that we are therefore, living out that truth. This is startlingly often not true. It is a great danger that standing for truth we are no longer being Christ-like.

The Danger to Truth**(v.3-4)**

Do not miss what Jude is emphasizing here.

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Error is dangerous. It is so dangerous that he changes the topic of his letter. Rather than explanation about salvation he is going to give a strong exhortation for doctrine. It is dangerous to the continuity to truth for God has ordained that truth be defended in this world by His people. Further, this truth is to be handed down. So what we receive, we guard as a treasured trust and we hand down to the next generation.

The threat to truth rests in two categories. First, that we will twist the grace of God into something else. Second, that we in some way deny the sovereign supremacy of God. So error is dangerous because it threatens the understanding and the propagation of the grace of God and the greatness of God.

The Great Demand for It

(v.5-23)

The great demand to contend for the faith arises from the character and conduct of those who oppose the truth in their teaching and application.

They are subject to God's judgment

(v.5-7)

⁵ Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Their *unbelief* calls forth the judgment of God even when they are connected to the people of God.

Their *rebellion* awaits the sure judgment of God who may wait in long patience.

Their *immorality* subjects them to the same eternal damnation that was demonstrated in the judgments of the past.

They do not understand the spiritual impact

(v.8-10)

Those who teach error often do not understand the importance nor the impact of what they are doing.

⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ⁹ But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." ¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

In this case here in Jude, they were unaware of the magnitude of the power with whom they were engaged spiritually. Their imaginations allowed them to think that they were able to overcome the powers of spiritual darkness.

Sadly, there is much error today even of this very kind. Further, even when it is a different class of error, the huge impact on the church and on God's people is often not appreciated. In the end, they will be destroyed by the very things they thought but did not really understand.

They follow the failures of the past

(v.11)

No error or heresy stands alone, distinct and unique from the errors and heresies in the Bible and in the past.

¹¹ Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

All errors are simply old ones in new clothes. The core of the error is the same, but it is expressed in new words and possibly, new arguments. Frankly, it is sad to see the same old arguments paraded out over and over again. C.H. Spurgeon wearied of having the fight the same old battles that had been waged and won long ago. Over some of what we will be facing, I just simply say, "Here we go again..."

It would be fruitful for future study to show what particular categories are being expressed in the way of Cain, the error of Balaam and the rebellion of Korah. These categories are illustrative and not exhaustive of all the categories of error the Bible has.

Now those who are involved with errors will often do two very different things in relation to the past:

They will show that the connection in church history means that there have always been some Christians who taught or held to their view. Thus, there is brought forth a sense of historical authenticity.

Others will deny the connection so as to avoid the answers and arguments that expose their error. If they can show that what they teach is new, different and distinct, then we cannot use those old arguments against their new idea.

Biblical Christians contend for the faith once delivered. The great privilege we have now is to build further on the good work of the past through hard work in the present to once again clearly defend the faith against error and heresy.

They do not appear to be what they really are (v.12-13)

This is a powerful paragraph filled with analogies Jude is using to capture the ethos, the feel, of what these people are like and what they do.

¹² These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Certainly, the particulars here would be an accurate description and analysis of the heretics among the people to whom Jude is writing. Though these may not characterize those against whom we contend, there are still some remarkable parallels, even in our own day.

They are *dangerous*. They are hidden reefs in the smooth sailing of spiritual communion.

They are *deceptive*. All through this these people deceive others into thinking they are what they are not.

They are *dead*. It is possible for their to be false teachers in the church who are not actually saved. The errors they teach are so essential to saving faith that their believing and teaching of the errors shows that they are spiritually dead.

They are *unproductive*. They and what they teach cannot produce what is promised.

Note further how Jude uses analogies to capture the ethos, the feel, of what they are like. These analogies show us that there is more to contending for the faith than just explaining doctrine and exposing error. There is an important element of capturing the ethos with carefully crafted and accurate word images.

Their godless life and teaching has been predicted (v.14-15)

That we are beset with error and in great need of contending for the faith should not surprise us.

¹⁴ It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Jude refers here to Enoch and then makes reference to an extra-biblical writing. Enoch looked forward to the judgment God would bring upon the godlessness of his age. That initial judgment came in the flood. But Jude says that same prophecy holds true to the godlessness (ungodliness) of those who oppose the truth in our own day. That godlessness will ever be increasing up to the day He returns.

So, we expect that there will be those against whom we must contend. We prepare ourselves for it and are constantly on the alert for its first, odious manifestations.

Their character and motivations are exposed (v.16)

I find the next sentences interesting.

¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Despite their pretensions to high learning and greater spiritual insight and power, they still show their sinfulness in some of the most common ways. Yet notice how these are a related cluster of sins. The first is how we sinfully respond to authority in our life and the second how we sinfully seek power over the lives of others.

This is a bad group of people to be associated with. Let us be careful not to be grumblers, fault finders and people who must have their own way. Let us watch for those whose speech is self-focused and filled with flattery.

Our Growing Duty because of It (v.17-23)

This duty can be thought of in three categories:

- It is *Biblical* – Focused on the apostolic deposit of truth
- It is *Personal* – Individual responsibility for growth
- It is *Relational* – Oriented towards rescuing others

To focus on the Word of God**(v.17-19)**

In the midst of error we must give our attention to the apostolic deposit of truth in the Word of God.

¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

Do not miss this. Much of the error that keeps coming back into the church does so because it sounds plausible. There is a satisfying sense of logic to it. It makes sense. The problem though is that it is not Biblical. Further, our focus on the Scripture must be accompanied by Biblical principles of studying and interpreting the Scripture. Much error is built on twisting or trimming the text.

Our focus on the Word of God helps us to identify those whose natural way of reasoning causes them to introduce divisive errors. Now I want to remind you of this. In fact, I aim to pound this into you. We who stand for truth are often accused of being *divisive*. This is *NEVER* the Biblical perspective. It is error that divides and truth that unites. If all Christians believed the truth, then there would be no division. So, when I as a shepherd and you as sheep stand for and contend for the truth, we are not being divisive. When people say that to me, I simply come to this text and to Titus and show that it is those who, without the Holy Spirit, teach error, mock truth and follow their own natural wit that are divisive. Come, then, be united in truth with love by focusing on the Scripture.

To maintain our Christian love**(v.20-21)**

The responsibility is to keep ourselves in God's love.

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

How do we do that? By the "ing" verbs here: ❶ by building up ourselves in doctrine (holy faith); ❷ by praying in the Holy Spirit; and ❸ longing for Jesus in His salvation and return. This underscores the importance of regular fellowship with Christ by Bible reading and study, praying and simply hungering and thirsting for Christ.

To express God's merciful compassion**(v.22-23)**

We must in contending for truth have mercy on those who have begun to believe the error or are caught up in its consequences.

²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

What is interesting here is the perspective we are to have. Those who are doubting truth or have begun to reap the harvest of the error are in need of being

rescued. I wonder how many who teach and hold to error view themselves this way? That is why God's merciful compassion must be called for from us. Once again, we must never ever delight in controversy. We must prize truth and delight in Christ so much that, our contending for the faith will be full of compassion.

The Glorious Doxology by It

(v.24-25)

"Now to Him..." This must be the great and ultimate aim of our contending for truth. We must have a doxological aim. We must long that God be exalted in the truth we love.

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Work – What He is able to do

(v.24)

Our delight is in what God can do. He can keep us from stumbling. He can make us stand blameless in His Presence. And He can fill our lives now and forever with His joy as we pursue our joy in Him. There must be a surging confidence in God because of this glorious and joyous ability of God.

Person – Who He is acknowledged to be

(v.25)

But we also delight in the God who is able. Here is the real challenge for needy people living in a fallen world. It is easy to rejoice in the gifts. It is harder to rejoice in the giver. And too often when we come to rejoice in the giver, we want to rejoice in things in which He is primarily related to us.

And doing so, I believe, cuts the root of true doxology. When will we learn to truly delight in the God who is behind the truth we contend for? When we it is to Him as the *only* God, as *our* Savior, as the Lord Jesus Christ that we come. And it is when we come to magnify (glorify) Him, to acknowledge Him as majestically supreme in His dominion and authority over us.

This is why the first aspect of our mission is *to savor the supremacy of God*. Beloved, when we do, all else follows.

Reflect and Respond

I have chosen to preach this message just before we take up the Book of Amos and engage in answering the Social Justice movement.

For some of you addressing these issues feels like it has taken too long, too slow, not urgent. Please be aware that these two series have been in the planning for over a year. What we have taught in *What the Bible Says About...* and what now we take up in Amos are the result of much reading, reflecting and writing. It is best, when the dangers are great and the issues are emotionally charged to take a stand with careful, thought-through Biblical strategies.

For some of you addressing these issues will be distressing. Part of that is because we will have to not only deal with the errors, but also quote and call out well known, popular preachers, teachers and groups. Some will be people we have relied on and recommend to you in the past. Their present endorsement of Christian Social Justice is deeply grieving and frankly, angering.

But in the end, we will stand for the Scriptures and for truth.



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Pastor Russ • The Chapel Pulpit • <date> Sunday Morning

Pastor Russ uses the *English Standard Version* in his preaching and teaching.

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