

Contend for the Faith

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Bible Text: Jude 1:3

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...one of those hard passages in Scripture to read and some of the things that are said in it are difficult, not just difficult to read, but difficult to consider, to contemplate on. I read the whole passage, really, to give the context for the verse that I want to speak on which is verse three where it says, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”¹

So Jude’s contention and Jude’s reason and Jude’s purpose in writing this short letter was to remind the believers: Never give up in your struggle—as we were part of during the break—to uphold that faith that has been established by Christ and his apostles. But not just to contend for, not just to uphold, but to earnestly, to earnestly contend. The literal idea is here is of someone in a wrestling match not willing to let go of his goal, not willing to give up but keeping going and not being satisfied until the goal has been met.

Now there is another part here as well that I want to bring out to start is that *the* faith and faith are different. Notice in verse 20. “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost...”² Two different ideas there. Verse three and verse 20 and this has two different ideas. Verse 20 [?] that our [?] is an subjective faith. Our faith in Christ our trust in Christ that is the faith he is talking about there. Your most holy faith. In other words, the faith that you possess in Christ, that’s the faith he is talking about there. But what it’s talking about in verse three it is something different. It is *the* faith. It is not subjective, but objective. Big difference. One is something that we experience, something that is within us, something that comes from us. The other is completely objective. It is irrelevant what we can teach about it. It is there. It is a reality.

And I want to look at a few points regarding *the* faith and if you want to note them down I am going to go through 10 brief points. I am going to emphasize that 10 brief points. I want to look at complete faith, a Christian faith, Christ centered faith, a compulsory faith a conforming faith, a convincing, a conversion faith, a confrontational faith, a constitutional faith and a confident faith. Again, I emphasize we will be brief, two or

¹ Jude 3

² Jude 20

three minutes on each point. I don't expect you to remember unless you write them down.

So, number one, it is a complete faith. Nothing needs to be added. Nothing needs to be prefaced or added on to the end of this faith. It is complete.

Notice what he says in verse three. "Contend for the faith which was once delivered..."³ literally entrusted. That is what the NIV I think says. I think the NIV has "Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."⁴ So God has given something to the Church as a trust. It can mean literally to be committed to somebody, to be handed over to somebody, something that is transferred to someone's possession, to be dispatched to, to be given possession of.

We often [?] to the gospel. I remember...while I can't remember the hymn but it talks about the gospel as a trust. The apostle Paul indeed called the gospel a trust that had been given him by God. Ephesians four says, "One Lord, one faith."⁵ So the first was that a faith that was once delivered, but it is one faith. It was no [?]. God has given this gift to his church.

But notice what Timothy said, thus, "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."⁶

Now two pretty important points here that I want to keep emphasizing that when the Church received *the* faith it was something objective, something substantial. We haven't really explained what that is yet, but that's the point, first of all, that there was *the* faith given to the Church which is something objective, substantial, corporate...nothing that needs to be added, never to be changed. And they were warned that in the latter times this faith would be abused, this faith would be changed, this faith would be seduced and this faith would be denied and all because that behind the working of this, behind...the force behind this, the power behind this are seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

So we could attain [?] to damage at least in the Church. I don't mean damage the faith essentially or effectively, but [?] damage the faith effectively is the doctrines of demons. And the challenge for the church is a little what Jude's challenge was. That Jude could have said, "Well, that is the latter days, you know, that will just sort of happen in 2000 years time, but don't need to worry about it now so I won't write this." No Jude knew, as the writer to the Thessalonians knew, that the spirit that would be at work was already at work. That there was already a seducing spirit. There was already the doctrines of devils seeking to destroy the faith.

³ Jude 3

⁴ Ibid (NIV)

⁵ Ephesians 4:5

⁶ 1 Timothy 4:1

Now many don't like this type of talk or this type of ideas. I'm not particularly popular with this sort of scope, but Jude, I'm sure, didn't know that. And yet the thing that compelled him to write the federal fact...most of the New Testament epistles or letters were written as a result of [?], most of them. Galatians, one of the key letters of the New Testament was written because there was some people coming in bringing in a legalistic gospel and Paul was amazed. He said, "I am amazed. I am amazed that you are so quickly departing from the one who has called you for the grace of Christ and are turning to another gospel, which is really no gospel at all. And I say unto you that whosoever preaches another gospel other than the one that you have heard, let him be eternally condemned, anathema, accursed."⁷

In the NIV in 1 Timothy four it literally says "abandon the faith, depart from the faith, abandon the faith."

Now, again, I want to want make this distinction and I want to get this into your mind even though I may bore you to tears, that there is a subjective faith that you have and then there is *the* faith which you cannot change, but you can depart from and you can lose sight of and which the Church can depart from as well.

And my belief is this that I believe that much of the Church has abandoned the faith. Many will say that to be an evangelical is to be born again. Well, I think that is nonsense. To be an evangelical is not to be born again. And for us to think...if we think that what makes us an evangelical is the new birth, that is nonsense.

Hold on. Hold on for a minute. What are you saying?

I thought I would get your attention. That's why I said it. Now we are sort of...now we are switched on. Now [?] I'm a heretic and we are going to...we are going to point out something here. The new birth is an experience, a real experience, yes, a saving experience and a real experience of God by his Spirit. But to be an evangelical is to hold to a certain sense of [?] about the Christian faith. There is a vast difference. Somebody can experience the new birth and yet be totally wayward in their doctrine. [?] to the difference.

You see, to be an evangelical is to hold to a certain—for want of a better way of putting it—to hold to a certain list of doctrinal beliefs: the deity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith alone through Christ alone by the grace of God alone and a whole host of other doctrines, the trinity. To be an evangelical is to hold to a list of doctrinal standards and beliefs. It isn't to be born again.

God, by his grace, saves a person. That person needs to be taught in the faith.

I have talked to people who I have walked away from and said, "I think that person is born again, but they haven't got a clue what the Bible says." You know, that way sounds even heretical, but I am sure you have had the same experience. You can see the starting

⁷ See Galatians 1:6-8

working of the Spirit of God but the person still hasn't come to really understand what the Bible says. Now, we can't make a judgment about that. And that is the important point.

Ultimately I cannot judge whether or not a person is born again. So therefore when somebody calls and says, "I am an evangelical." Utterly [?] and nonsense.

I am going to be saying, "Why do you say you are an evangelical?"

"Because I am born again."

But that does not make them an evangelical. If you say the mass is the sacrifice of Christ repeated Sunday by Sunday you are not an evangelical because an evangelical says that Christ has died once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous brings to God. An evangelical believes that. If you do not believe that you are not an evangelical.

And let me emphasize this by reading a couple of verses in 1 Corinthians 15 and just verses one to four. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you."⁸ And he wants to remind them here. He wants to reaffirm. "The gospel I preached unto you."⁹ Why? Because there was so much confusion. Again, this letter was written to clear up a whole lot of issues. And one of the issues that Paul wanted to clear up was what the gospel was.

It is very interesting and I would encourage you to do this, but if a Jehovah Witness comes to your door or a Mormon comes to your door or if anyone comes to your door from any religious group ask him what the gospel is. Quick question: Can you please tell me what the gospel is? Pretty interesting the very...I have never in all my experience—which is not much—but my experience of talking to people from other religions. I have asked them what the gospel is. They have never given me the answer that the apostle Paul has given even though it is obvious. It is patently obvious to a college. Because what is declared unto you...

...the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ...¹⁰

Now we notice—sorry to stop there for a minute, verse three. "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received."¹¹ It is something objective, substantive that Paul receives. It is a set of beliefs that Paul received. "How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."¹² The death of Christ, verse four, and that he was buried, the

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:1

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:1-3

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 15:3

¹² Ibid.

burial of Christ, “and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures,”¹³ the resurrection of Christ. “And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.”¹⁴

The gospel is this: the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nothing more, nothing less.

And you say, “Well, hold on, Mark. That completely contradicts everything that’s just said. You have just said that someone can be born again and not be an evangelical.”

And I say, “Absolutely.” Somebody can be saved by the grace of God and not be an evangelical. But he will be, you see, [?] to live and to come to the Word of the God because the Bible promises us, I want to qualify with [?] of this that those who are born again will come to know the truth if they have time enough to do so.

What I want is to show that Paul agrees exactly with what I have just said. In verse two what does it say? “By which also ye are saved, if...”¹⁵ There is an if there. “...if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”¹⁶

Does anybody have an NIV there? Who is going to be brave and also admit they have an NIV? Does anybody have an NIV? George, would you read verse two for us because it is actually clearer in there?

George: “By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”¹⁷

Yeah. “If you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.”¹⁸

What did Paul tend to replace? “While I was with you I did not hold back any, proclaiming to you the whole counsel of God.”

What Paul is saying is, “This gospel saves and we can know this gospel saves, but if we think we can disagree with other teachings of Paul and still be convinced that we are saved, we are wrong in our thinking.”

In other words, yes, the gospel saves, but the gospel in the right content. In other words, I can’t come along and say, “Well, yes, I believe that Jesus died and was buried and rose again. I accept that. But I still want to go along in my false religious worship.” And that is not acceptable to Paul. Paul says, “I am already...already sort of...” We looked up the NIV, but I will give it some glory here. It really brings out the power of what Paul was saying, “If you hold to the words I preached unto you this gospel is effective.”

¹³ 1 Corinthians 15:4

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:5

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:2

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:2 (NIV)

¹⁸ Ibid.

So somebody can be born again, but they can have no assurance of their salvation unless they hold to what the Word of God says. They can have absolutely no assurance. If somebody is saying, “I believe that this idolatrous practice is ok in the sight of God,” there can be absolutely no progression in the Christian life because they are confounding the Scriptures. They are wresting the Scriptures.

So to be an evangelical is to hold to an objective, substantive set of beliefs that are taught in the New Testament. It doesn't mean you have to hold to a certain creed. There's many good historical creeds. But what it comes down to is our view of the New Testament especially, our view of the Scriptures that determines our standing with the faith.

1 Timothy Paul says to Timothy, “Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.”¹⁹ He went on to say in chapter six of 1 Timothy, “They have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”²⁰ Verse 21, “Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.”²¹

Essentially, the Christian religion is something that we come to with [?]. The problem with modern day spiritual experience is that it is all concerned with the emotions. Now, we do not go to the emotions are a strong part of our Christian life, an essential part in many ways, but I would challenge you to look up all the references—and we certainly won't do it now—but look up all the references to the faith in the New Testament and try and find how many relate to our emotions. And then put on a little list how many speak to the mind, how many speak to what we believe and what we think. That vastly outweighs, it vastly outweighs the emotion list because substantially when we come to Christ we are making decisions in our minds and our Christian faith is based in the mind, not only in the mind. Yes, it is in our heart. Yes, it is in our souls. Yes, it is in our desires. But substantially it is in the mind.

One other [?] there from a couple of weeks ago with the children and we were talking about our [?] and we were trying to explain to them that, you know, the importance of your brain and your mind and so on. And we were just thinking about all the... you know, you take out your heart and replace it. You can take out the leg and you won't...you are still the same person. But you remove this... I would say you are gone because this is you. What you think is in here. The decisions you make is in here. And when we come to the gospel it is in this realm that we make the decisions and we express our faith. So if your mind is wrong everything is wrong.

The emotions can be wrong. But once the mind is right the emotions will follow. It is just like in every relationship. If we have a proper mindset everything else follows. We can feel emotionally high about somebody at one point and then...and then...one of our daughters was [?]. No. Yeah, yeah. Absolute. He was big into [?]. Absolutely [?]. And

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 5:12

²⁰ 1 Timothy 6:10

²¹ 1 Timothy 6:21

at the [?], you know, that was wonderful. Today if you said, [?]. Go away from me because they effected his emotions at one part of his life.

And some people are affected by the Bible at one part of their life and they get emotionally excited about it and they dance and they sway and they think this is great and everything feels good. And then the emotions go and it is gone because it never happened up here. Nothing happened up here. Therefore the emotions couldn't last because there was nothing here.

Many people, you know, they are going to get married to whom they are married. Somebody who looks, you know, absolutely like a pop star or whatever or somebody who has lots of money or whatever reason. Now if that reason goes afterwards, you know, there is no other reason why I married them. So therefore it is gone.

If we come to Christ and it is only for...and one of the big problems in the modern Church, again, is this emphasis that has been put on...I read a tract. I meant to bring it with me. It was a tract from a church in the city center. I use that term loosely. And one of their reasons for coming to Christ was that Christ would help us and in, you know, prosperity and, you know, that Christ would meet all your needs in the world and, you know, that if you come to Christ that you will never have to worry about you have from day to day.

Well, there was very little about the [?]. There was very little, if anything, about sin. There was absolutely nothing about God's holiness.

The gospel then...we are coming to Christ so you wouldn't have to worry about your social daily living.

That will draw a lot of people. That will draw a whole horde of people. It drew many people in Christ's own experience. I just realized that I need two or three minutes so I won't go through the 10 points, but this is the substance of what we are trying to say this morning, that if we are drawn by anything else accept the faith to Christ it is not real. If it is the faith that draws us to Christ...I remember Ron saying one time if the Word of God brings people into the Church, the Word of God will keep you in the Church. If it is anything else the Word of God will never keep them in the Church. This is so true, isn't it? It was the Word of God that brought people in. That's why the Church should never use any other means for evangelism. The Word of God should be the only means of evangelism. If you use anything else, yes, we might bet the people in using some little trick or some little thing that we do. But if that is all that is going to bring the people in and keep the people we have to keep making it better.

We see this in the Toronto blessing as the classic example. It started off with an... you know, some excitable worship and then I have to go to something bigger, something better. Toronto blessing was another step. And there has been another step. I [?]. Oh yeah, the gold teeth. That's the latest one. The gold teeth is the latest thing. People come into the meeting. The preacher stands up and preach. At the end of the meeting there is

200 or 300 people in the [?] with gold teeth and that is a gift of God through the gospel. That's amazing.

You see, you are wasting your time with [?]. You will never get gold teeth in [?]. Oh, dear. And, you know, this is all they have because they don't have the faith and the [?] and their [?] is true of many...I know loads of people and I wouldn't name because I wouldn't bring attention to any one individual. But I know people who have been involved in these sort of groups and they have ended up in mental homes. They have ended up ruined, not just in their faith, but ruined in their life because they have held on to things that are empty, that are momentary, that [?].

And sometimes you might read in [?] and say we should be more lively. Yeah, sometimes it could be better. It could be a little bit more lively, of course. But that is fleeting. That is something...I mean, if you want to get...if you want to get a buzz, you know, [?]...don't go into [?]. But I mean, that's what the world wants. It wants to get a buzz. When we come here we come to meet with Christ. And if we are not satisfied with that, well, then, you know, somewhere else is where we need to go. And once you make a decision to come to Christ that's the basis.

Isn't that what we read in 1 Peter? That was on my mind when I read 1 Peter, that Christ is precious to us. We don't need anything else. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."²²

It is a complete faith because it is finished. Do you ever do jigsaw puzzles? I remember one time I was on a 3000 piece jigsaw puzzle. Well, we just...we could never actually do it. And it was back with me at home playing [?] and, you know, we had to go...we had these trays and we put our colors together and [?] and anyway you went you couldn't even eat your dinner because everywhere you went there was bits of jigsaw puzzle everywhere and you had to [?] sort of do something if you something else. And we never got it finished. So we just got frustrated and just threw it back in the bag. And I don't know where it ended up at the end of the day. But we only say a jigsaw is complete when it is finished. Until it is finished it is not complete. And until it is complete it is not finished. And the Christian faith is complete because it is finished.

What does Hebrews say? "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."²³ The truth of that is in the second verse of chapter 12. "And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."²⁴ He sat down because he was finished.

Spurgeon had this tremendous statement to make. "I cannot believe that when Christ was dying he left his people for whom he died without a word. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' is for sinners, not saints. 'I thirst' is for himself. And so that bitter cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Lo and behold thy Son' was for Mary. 'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise,' is for the penitent thief.' Into thy

²² 1 Peter 2:7

²³ Hebrews 12:2

²⁴ Ibid.

hands I commend my spirit,' is for the Father. Jesus must have had something to say in the hour of his death for his Church. And surely it is, if he is dying for her. He tells her, shouting it in her ear that had become dull and heavy with despair, 'It is finished.' That is the word for the Church. It is complete. Nothing to be added. 'It is finished, oh, my redeemed one, my bride, my well beloved, for whom I came to lay down my life. It is finished. The work is done.'"

Love's redeeming work is done.
Fought the fight, the battle won.

It is the Christian faith. A number of years ago Prince Charles said that we come to the throne that he would no longer...or he would be the first monarch in almost 400 years to drop the title "the defender of the faith." But rather he would be called "the defender of faith."

Now the British monarch was never the defender of the faith in the first place, but it shows a dramatic swing away from the faith. But no longer is the faith important. We have 167 members in the World Council of Churches saying we all worship the same God. That is absolute nonsense. Snake worshippers, people who use divination are all part of the World Council of Churches and we all worship the same God.

It is all because of this modern idea. No, it isn't really a modern idea. I shouldn't say that. It is an old idea. It is the old idea that it is about my experience. It is my experience that counts.

Yes, your experience counts in certain areas, of course. No good for me to say I am a Christian and go out and live the way I want and sin and then come in and say everything is all right. Of course that would be nonsense. But my experience isn't the basis of my faith. My faith is the basis of my experience.

Mr. Matthew read a number of weeks ago John's words, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."²⁵

Paul said to Titus, "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness."²⁶

Acts 11. Just turn with me there just a moment. We won't be too much longer. We will have to come back to this next week. Acts 11 verses 25 and 26.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.²⁷

²⁵ John 4:24

²⁶ Titus 1:1

²⁷ Acts 11:25-26

They were called Christians based upon the teaching of Paul. Do you notice that? They were called Christians because of the teachings of Paul. They recognized in the teachings of Paul a new sect, a new religion, a new faith. And if you want to know what I'm going to call this, well, we call them Christians. So it is the Christian faith.

The, 1 Peter chapter four and just verses 16 to 18.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?²⁸

And it is the view of this Church and also the view of all those who profess to be truly believers that it is only Christians who are acceptable to God. We live in a world where it is unpopular to speak against Islam. It is unpopular to speak against Buddhism and all the various eastern religions. But we must hold this truth that it is only the Christian faith that is acceptable in the sight of God, nothing else.

Now I am not saying that only those who call themselves Christians and live terrible immoral lives are acceptable. No. It is only the Christian faith that is acceptable to God. And only those who will submit themselves...because this is the point, it is only those who submit themselves to the Christian faith are the ones who are submitting themselves to God.

We read a verse in 1 Peter and verse...or, sorry, it is not 1 Peter. I think it is James, isn't it? James, it says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."²⁹ How do we submit to God? We submit to Christian faith. We submit to the Bible. And it is only those who submit to the Bible are acceptable in the sight of God. A Muslim is not acceptable to God. A Buddhist is not acceptable to God. If they are converted and submit themselves to the Christian faith, then they are accepted.

And in a day of multiculturalism, pluralism, that is a very hard teaching. But that is a fact. And we look at a world that is lost and even in the Christian Church is lost because it has lost its hold on the Christian faith.

It is unpopular today to say, "Well, for the next number of weeks we are going to have a doctrinal study on the various subjects." And that is because it is not seen as important. It is not seen as vital. I tell you the blight on the Church today is that we all enjoy ourselves.

That might sound extreme, but I believe that is true, that what is sought today is that what we need to do is to get the congregation involved, get a good time, have a good time. We can all go feeling better afterwards.

²⁸ 1 Peter 4:16-18

²⁹ James 4:7

Yes, that is all good. And it is good to feel involved. It is good to feel a part of what is happening and so on. But it is nowhere near to be compared with what we hold as the Christian faith.

Finally, this faith is Christ centered—at least finally for this morning. Acts 20 Paul says that faith in Christ...Galatians 2:16: “the faith of Christ;”³⁰ Galatians 2:20: “the faith of the Son of God;”³¹ Philippians 3:9: “the faith of Christ;”³² Colossians 2:7, “rooted and built up in him;”³³ James 2:1, “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory;”³⁴ Revelation 14 and verse 12, “the faith of Jesus.”³⁵ This faith is not just Christian, but it is Christ centered. It is centered on, squarely based on the person of Jesus Christ.

But having said that, there is also another tendency in modern Christianity and to separate Jesus from the Bible. It is impossible to do. We cannot separate the living Word from the written Word, the λογος (log’-os) from the Word preached. And when we preach Christ that is—here is the point I am leading to and I will finish with this. How do we bring Christ to people? How do I bring Christ to people? To preach the Word. The only means to bring Christ is to preach the Word because he is the living Word. This is the written Word. If I want to bring Christ...

Paul was amazed with the Corinthian Church that they had not just a love in another gospel, but they had a love in another Jesus. This is a Christian church, one of the biggest Christian churches in New Testament times. Another Jesus, how is that possible?

In departing from the Word. They had departed from the Word of God, therefore it was easy for another Jesus to come in. The Jesus of the Bible is the Jesus that brings many things into our lives that are uncountable. We will look at that next week. But let us be careful. Let us as a small church—and in many ways it is good to be a small church because you don’t get caught up in your own pride. You are humbled. You are more focused on the Lord. That is a good thing. Let us look at the advantages we have not the disadvantages. And let us be careful together as we strive, as the Scriptures tell us, as one man, striving for the faith of the gospel. And let us make sure that in our own hearts and minds we fully know what we have believed in.

“I know,” Paul says, “I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”³⁶

Let us close in prayer.

³⁰ Galatians 2:16

³¹ Galatians 2:20

³² Philippians 3:9

³³ Colossians 2:7

³⁴ James 2:1

³⁵ Revelation 14:12

³⁶ 2 Timothy 1:12