

Contending for the Faith

Jude 3

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Jude 1:3 (NIV)

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

Do you have the courage to stand for the truth of the Bible when everybody around you is laughing at it, criticizing it, disbelieving it?

You can't place a value on a book of the Bible based on its size. The book of **Jude** contains only 25 verses. Its style is simple, and yet its message is conveyed with both authority and love, and is as important today as it was when first written.



The author, who was more than likely the half-brother of Jesus Christ, urged his readers to **"contend earnestly for the faith"** (**verse 3**). What, exactly, did he mean by "contending for the faith"? And why did he feel compelled to devote his epistle to this subject?

The Greek root for the word **"contend"** means **"to fight"** or **"to stand for."** It speaks of battling, warring, and struggling. Jude chose the present form of the verb, which means that it is to be a continuous action. The faith to which Jude is referring is not our personal faith in Jesus, but rather what we believe about salvation, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the attributes of God, future things, and grace, the whole body of Christian doctrine.

Suppose I was to ask you, **"What do you believe as a Christian?"** Are your beliefs settled enough in your mind for you to articulate them clearly? Could you explain **Salvation? Sanctification? The Church? Baptism? The Lord's Supper?** It is important to be able to communicate these truths because that is how the Gospel has been preserved. God the Father revealed it through the Lord Jesus Christ, who shared it with his disciples. They in turn explained it to the body the church. Then, as now, God's people teaching the truth to others extend the Gospel all over the world. As the Apostle Paul explains in **Colossians 1:6**, this faith was delivered to us not simply to be believed and to be kept, *but to be shared*.

Next, we must look at why this letter was written. In **verse 4**, we read, **"For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."** Jude saw that false

teachers were infiltrating the church. They crept in, sneaking in a little bit at a time under the guise of being one thing, but in reality being something quite different. And that continues to be how the ungodly operate.

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Today's false teachers creep in under the pretense of being correct and wanting to grow the church and build up the saints. They won't announce, "I am a rank liberal," "I don't believe half the book of Genesis," or "I think all of Revelation is symbolic." No, they slip in "**camouflaged**," mixing truth with error, and once inside seminaries and churches, they can do significant damage with their flawed doctrines.

The Bible has much to say about false teachers coming into the church, upsetting and dividing it. Here's how it happens: under false pretenses, liberal teachers (those who deny the infallibility of Scripture) infiltrate the body, bringing with them their false doctrines. The fact is, our theology should govern our morality, but too often it's the other way around, false teachers adjust their theology to fit the behavior they prefer. Liberal theology allows for all kinds of thinking and behavior. Gradually, these erroneous ideas weaken the entire fellowship by first undermining individuals, who in turn destabilize their families. Eventually, the firm biblical foundation of that fellowship is cut out from beneath it.

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Another factor in the propagation of false teaching is popularity. Celebrities in our culture tend to attract quite a following. Be careful. Don't ever be taken in by a media personality, no matter who it is! Too many people believe whatever they hear from a prominent person whom they admire. God wants us to have a discerning spirit so that we won't be taken in by anything or anybody at any time, because He desires that we separate ourselves from false doctrine.

In **verse 16, Jude** goes on to describe false teachers as "**grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.**" Now, you've probably heard it said that we ought to be sweet to everybody, but I don't know a single verse in the Bible that instructs being sweet to those who sneak in with incorrect doctrine and a determination to divide the body of Christ. Paul says we are to separate ourselves from them (**2 Corinthians 6:17**), and he makes no mention of indulging them or embracing their ideas. This doesn't mean we can be harsh, ugly, or un-Christ like, but we do not have to tolerate error.

Some of you reading this newsletter may belong to a church where the pastor doesn't believe the whole Bible. Then why don't you confront him with Scripture? Any man who stands behind a pulpit is responsible to God to teach the truth and nothing but the truth. He is also responsible to the families of his congregation because the truth of God's Word is what protects them. You cannot afford to have your children learning doctrine that will absolutely destroy their morality, their faith in the Word of God, and their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. If your preacher is not teaching truth, your mind and your children's minds are being corrupted.

I say this lovingly, but it does need to be said: You ought to change churches.

A lot of folks feel they can't leave a congregation their family has been with for generations. Or, they might think their pastor would not mislead them. Sometimes they imagine they're strong enough to withstand the effects of any "inadvertent" error. Let me tell you something: All it takes is a grain or two of untruth to corrupt a way of thinking. Especially if you are a parent, you can't afford to tolerate a liberal pastor or school that mixes into truth just enough error to destroy your family. There is a lot of false doctrine being taught, and if that is the situation in your church, do as the Bible says, and separate from it.

It is critical for God's people to know Scripture. Studying the truth of God's Word is the only way to be able to identify error. When you know the truth and you hear someone preaching false doctrine, something inside of you flares up and you immediately perceive spiritual "red flags." You sense, "That's not right! Something is wrong!" What you are discerning is the Holy Spirit sounding an alarm. But to have an effective "filter," you must commit God's truth and Bible verses and biblical principles to your mind. Then the Holy Spirit has material to use as He teaches, guides, and brings things to your remembrance.

Do you know the basics of your faith? If your Bible was destroyed, would you be able to explain what you believe and why? Are you willing to contend for your faith? A lot of people don't want any conflict or confrontation in their life, and yet the biblical admonition to contend carries with it a sense of **wrestling, tension, and struggle**. When it comes to false teachers who do not believe the entire Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of the living God, Jude tells us that a battle is necessary.

Be encouraged. Think of how Scripture has survived through the ages. The only reason we have the Bible and institutions that preach the truth is that some faithful Christian soldiers set themselves apart to defend the faith, to fight for it, and to multiply it by getting the Word to others. The whole book of Jude is a warning, a declaration, and an appeal: God's people must understand His truth so that they cannot be mesmerized by erroneous teachers who are eloquent in speech and impressive in personality, but deadly in doctrine.

Do you have the courage to stand for the truth of the Bible when everybody around you is laughing at it, criticizing it, disbelieving it? Ever since this book was put together by God, men have done everything in their power to destroy it, but God sums up the situation in one phrase: "**The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever**" ([Isaiah 40:8](#)). Its message is eternal. And think about it, you own it! What value do you place on that?

During the course of your life here on earth you will see more deceptive doctrine propagated, not only on television and radio, but in newspapers and magazines . . . and in churches! When you hear untruth spoken in the name of Christ, no matter whose lips it

comes from, ask yourself this: Did God say it? The only way you can be deceived by error is by being ignorant of the truth of the Bible, and the only way you are going to learn is by getting into God's Word for yourself. Start reading it and God will develop a discerning spirit in you. Then you will be ready, as Jude urged, to contend for the faith.