

## **Contending for the Faith**

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Discernment for the Last Days

**Text: Jude 1:3**

Even in the early church a spiritual attack was being waged against the Gospel. The **purity** of the Gospel message was being distorted and mishandled by notable Christian personalities dealing in spiritual error. It had only been decades since Jesus had risen from the dead and that Paul prophesied about those who would seduce people away from the truth.

Jude was so aware of the error filled teaching in the church that he changed his plan to write a letter about salvation and instead warned about the **danger** of this false teaching. Jude said it was “needful” for him to write. This means that it was an urgent necessity. He saw the problem was serious and needed attended to without delay so that he could give instruction on how to **address** the problem. The same is true in our day.

Jude said that it was necessary to **exhort** them to contend or to defend or fight strenuously for the faith. The idea behind exhortation is military one. A commanding officer would gather soldiers together and speak to the troops about the reality and the dangers of the battlefield. He would remind them that injury and even death could occur. He didn’t ignore the dangers but encouraged the troops to stand tall, look at the enemy and fight bravely. Jude knew that error was attempting to invade the church and he knew that pretending the problem wasn’t there would not **fix** the problem. He would not allow the infection to spread without resistance.

The idea Jude expressed in “earnestly contending” is a picture of two wrestlers who are fighting with all of their might to win a match. The idea is that we are going to have to wrestle between issues of **truth** and deception. For anyone who has had these conversations it certainly feels this way. We are going to need to subdue those who are twisting the truth to fit their own ends.

**Ephesians 6:12, 2 Corinthians 10:5**

It is important to understand what we are contending for. Jude says we are contending for **the faith**. Not faith for miracles but we are contending for doctrine which is the time-tested truth of scripture. Remember that true **faith** comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

**Romans 10:17** Satan’s primary tactic is to call God’s Word into question, just like he did with Eve; “**Did God really say ...**”. The early church was being attacked externally like we are today from a Godless society. Christians withstood intense pressure of persecution from a pagan world and hostile government.

The Christians were also being attacked from **within** by leaders that introduced doctrines and new ideas that were diversions from the truth. Because of this **disease** that began to invade the church, people were getting off track. Jude knew that if this was not stopped that the spiritual condition of the church would grow increasingly worse.

The disease that had begun to plague the church was called **compromise**.

Compromise is an accommodation with the world around them in order to provide relief from persecution and from the perpetual pressure to conform. The idea behind it was - “Let’s **bend** a little and become willing to be more like the world so they won’t have problems accepting us.

Much of the false teaching that comes to the church comes from well-respected brothers and sisters that have held positions of responsibility and influence. People would have a difficult time seeing them as **evil** or as being used by Satan. Yet that is what they are doing as they “bring in” error and/or compromise. Much of the teaching **waters down** their version of the truth. This dilutes the effectiveness and potency of the Gospel to change lives.

A demonic saturation of the truth produces a long-term destructive effect upon the church. It produces a **weak** church so contaminated with spiritual sickness that very little power remains. It literally becomes powerless. **2 Timothy 3:5** This is why we must refuse to budge from what we know to be true and live **holy** lives separate and not co-mingling with the world.

The power we have as Christians to overcome the world comes in several ways:

- ❖ Our **separateness** from it **2 Corinthians 6:17**
- ❖ Our **holiness** unto God or being set apart for God alone and a commitment to a life of purity **1 Peter 1:13-16**
- ❖ Our desire to **humble** ourselves before the Lordship of Christ **James 4:10**
- ❖ Our commitment and insistence on the **truth** **John 8:32**
- ❖ Living a life of **faith** that desires to please God alone even if it means standing alone **1 John 5:4**

When seducing spirits begin to have their way in the body of Christ, some are willing to barter truth for **peace** with a morally lost world. The desire to be “relevant” is really a desire to fit in and be accepted instead of standing out and being obviously different. We must never lose sight of the fact that it is our “different” that allows people to see the difference that Jesus can make in their life.

It is important to know that in the early church, just like today, everyone did not **depart** from the faith. It only takes a **few** visible spiritual leaders getting off track to bring the infection to the entire church. Today this is easier than ever with the technology we have to make a “few” available to the many. Just like an infectious disease is spread by multiplying with only a few cells and spreads to the many, this is how spiritual disease is spread by infecting one cell at a time as they come into contact with one another. Through Jude, the Holy Spirit is calling upon us to take a stand and contend for the faith so this will spread no further.

**Romans 10:17, Romans 1:16**

As Christians we must use great **discernment** about who we allow to speak into our lives. Because of radio, TV, the internet and publishing we have more access to information and opinions than at any time in history.

The saying is true that – “all that glitters is not gold.” This is why we must **guard** our hearts, minds, and homes more diligently than ever before. We must never lose sight of the context in which we live. We are living in last-days territory.

Jude tells us that we are to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints. The Greek word “apax” means “once”. It means once for all. It carries the idea of **finality**, completion or something so complete that it needs nothing added to it. The Word of God needs no **improvements**, amendments, modifications or alterations. **Jude 1:3** The Word of God is final, settled, authoritative and life changing all on its own. **Hebrews 4:12** This is why seducing spirits want to wrestle the Word away from us and replace it with philosophies and so-called progressive thinking that has no power to save, change and heal.

Jude tells us that the truth was **delivered** to the saints. This means that it was given to us for our safe-keeping. It carries with it the imagery of handing something down intact from one generation to the next. Traditions are easily lost. Long-held traditions can be altered and changed from one generation to the next over time unless someone cares enough to **preserve** them. Some people call this being picky. This is done by those who do not care. Jude reminds us of our responsibility to handle the Word of God carefully. We are called to guard and defend it and to pass it along to others in its purest, most carefully preserved form.

When we study and understand the power that is in the truth found in the Word of God, we will want to commit our life to sharing it in its fullest and purest form. Nothing **added** or deleted from it. **1 Peter 1:3-4, Deuteronomy 4:2, Revelation 22:18-19 (AMP), 2 Timothy 3:16** All scripture is God **breathed**. This is where we get the idea of inspiration of God. The Bible contains the life, essence, energy and the dynamic force of God Himself and has the power to accomplish **whatever** He needs to be done. **Ecclesiastes 8:4**

Jude was seeing the enemy trying to insert error into the doctrine of the Early Church in an effort to divest God’s truth of its power. It was being replaced with a new style of teaching that was supposed to be “more fitting” for the day. That sounds very familiar. The apostles and in the centuries since there have been a great deal of time spent in correcting false teaching.

Speaking up today has been made more difficult in modern society because the big issue today is not truth but **respect**. Truth has taken a back seat to the concept of honoring others’ beliefs even if their beliefs are opposed to the doctrines of the Bible. The Bible calls us to speak the truth in love. This means that we are to honor people with respect without respecting their ideas and assertions.

~ Rick Renner – Without a doubt there is a culture of authentic, Biblical honor that has been nearly lost in this last-days society. It has been redirected and redefined under the guise of inclusivism that “respects” everyone as being right-everyone except those who hold fast and carefully guard Biblical and moral absolutes. This new culture of honor often excludes Bible-believing Christians and is, in fact, dishonoring of God and His holy eternal, immutable, incontrovertible Word.

Today, even in the church, the most basic tenets of faith are unknown by many church goers. Basic Bible doctrines such as the virgin birth, the sinlessness of Christ, man's sin, salvation, holiness, eternal judgement and the return of Christ.

It is important to understand that this mindset and infection has already begun to infect the modern church. A new statistic shows that approximately **40%** of "practicing Christians" in America do not believe in absolute moral truth. Today many young adults, even so-called Christian ones, hold a negative view of people who adhere to absolute truth about morality. They consider them narrow-minded and even judgmental. The Bible is clear that the way of God is a narrow one. **Matthew 7:13-14**

When a majority of a society believes that everyone is right and that no one is wrong the act of correcting those beliefs becomes very difficult. In our day many believe that it is **inappropriate** to correct someone for what he or she believes. **James 5:20** Modern society is drunk on the idea of self-gratifying freedom. People believe that no one is wrong in matters of faith, truth or belief. They have grown so confused that they don't realize that if everything is true then nothing is true, that if you can believe anything then everything is unbelief. While declaring that there are no absolutes, they have just declared something that they believe to be absolutely true.

Once a person believes that there is no absolute truth, they have reached another conclusion by default; no one has the moral **authority** to bring correction to someone else. These people become **unteachable**. **Proverbs 26:12(AMP), 1 Timothy 6:4 (NLT), 2 Timothy 3:7** Rebellion to authority enables people to escape correction. They forget that true authority is a place for **warning** and help and guidance. **Acts 20:28** Like an adult warning a child about on-coming traffic we are called to be loving but to speak with urgency.

Urgency isn't always concerned about politeness but it is loving. When danger is immediately ahead you can't whisper about the problem. You need to lift your voice and plead. When Paul addressed the issue, he wasn't **dainty** with his words. **Philippians 3:2-3 (NLT)** The word dogs describes dangerous dogs that roamed the countryside that were vicious, nomadic (this is key- they roam alone or stick in packs together never staying in one place.) They are wild, uncontrollable, and diseased. The apostles and early church leaders raised their voices to alert the churches of the danger that was among them. **Acts 20:29-31**

Paul said that they would speak **perverse** things. The word perverse means to distort, twist or bend. This is a key characteristic of error. It is usually a **new** version or twist of an established, older message that is slightly twisted to correspond with current deceitful objectives. Paul was shocked to find how the Galatians had even had some kind of positional change. **Galatians 1:6-8**

An essential weapon against deception is our **sound** mind. **Galatians 3:1-3** The word foolish is a picture of a person who is not using their mind. The problem isn't that a person doesn't have a mind, just that the person isn't using his or her mind to think through things.

These people are feasting on spiritual error without even thinking about what they were feasting on. **2 Timothy 2:15** This is a timely warning for those of us that have all the information provided for us so quickly that thinking isn't even required. We need to use our minds to keep our heads on straight. Today, because of the ease of access to information many are now mentally **lazy**. We are constantly mentally stimulated and mistake that stimulation for accurate truth. One of the signs of the end-times will be the availability of instant information. **Daniel 12:4** What we need is **wisdom** and this will result in the ability to discern the truth from error. **Proverbs 4:7**

Wisdom and discernment are needed to comprehend things. Today many have a difficult time with analytical thinking and have difficulty reading or understanding anything of greater **complexity** than a text message. Our "smart" devices have made us unable to think and analyze things at a high level. We are more critical of everything but are not capable of critical thinking. This present generation's ability to think and process is becoming diminished and dulled. This inability to be **sharp** with our wits about us will lead to mass deception in the days ahead. We have been crippled to think beyond the **surface** level of things. Christians need to develop a **Berean** spirit **Acts 17:11** and be more like the sons of **Issachar**. **1 Chronicles 12:32 (NLT)**

It is ironic that the most brilliant, innovative engineers in history have created a digital world that is now producing what may be the most non-thinking generation in recent times. People's ability to think, to process, **gather** and study information to ensure that they arrive at an accurate conclusion has been greatly diminished. It is our responsibility as Christians to avoid this modern pitfall by keeping our minds renewed by the Word of God. **John 8:32, Romans 12:2-3** We are not to fall into this thinking decline and become gullible with the rest of the crowd.

Remember that the best way to cover up a conspiracy is to make up so many conspiracy theories that people will be unable to determine the truth from a lie. If everything is a conspiracy then nothing is a conspiracy. Or people will become so tired that they stop seeking the truth. There has never been a better time in history for Christians to read, study and **meditate** on the Word of God. The way to circumvent spiritual seduction and deception is by **knowing**, understanding and being rooted in the truth of the Bible. **Isaiah 55:8-9**

If the Christians whom Paul was speaking to had used their brains and thinking about what was being put on their spiritual plates they probably wouldn't have been bewitched. The same can be said of many in our day. **Galatians 1:6-7** Paul **marveled**; he was shocked, amazed, and bewildered that people so easily followed "another" gospel. Many of us are amazed just like Paul was at how easily people have wandered from the truth. He said it really isn't **another** gospel. It is error packaged with elements of truth and presented as the authentic thing, yet it was entirely different in reality. This may sound rough to modern ears and people do have the right to believe what they want. Paul was unwilling to let the people believe anything without first being presented with the TRUTH as the alternative.

Like Jude and Paul, we must contend for the faith.