

"Why the Urgency?"

Jude 3-7

We began our exposition of Jude last week introducing us to Jude, the person. A stepbrother of Jesus along with his brother James the leader of the early church, who before Jesus' resurrection did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Amazingly by God's grace Jude and his other brothers believed in Jesus after the resurrection and are waiting with their mother Mary and Jesus' closest followers for the coming of the Holy Spirit in the upper room in Acts 1:14.

Jude wanted to write a letter about the marvelous gospel, encouraging the believers in the hope in Christ but there is an urgent matter that he needs to address.

⁴ For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

'Secretly slipped in' or 'crept in unawares' is first in the sentence, emphasized by Judas. Remember, Judas is Jude's given name and he's writing a letter warning about other Judas types, who appear to be part of Jesus' followers but they have hidden their true intentions to mislead the church, causing confusion, thus derailing believers from doing God's will. If I were to have announced this to you this morning here, three thoughts would have immediately entered your mind.

- 1) Who are they?
- 2) I hope he's not talking about me.
- 3) How do we know if there are false teachers here?

Which is probably the same questions Jude's hearers wondered and now all of a sudden are listening closer. How do you know if people have infiltrated our churches with the intent to cause damage? This is what Jude's letter is all about. He still gives us encouragement about the faith while he places it alongside the lies of the enemy so that we will

Be Alert to the Signs of False Teachers **(vv.3-4)**

Jude doesn't want us to have the false notion that once we're saved we have no more part to play in our salvation. This is why he commands us to "*contend for the faith*"? We all have a responsibility to keep committed to the faith and live it out individually, but also to grow in our knowledge of God's Word so those who are seeking to sneakily undermine the truth will be recognized for what they are.

He calls what we believe "the faith" which was "*once for all entrusted to the saints*." This faith is a specific body of truth that was revealed to earlier disciples who faithfully passed it on over time to new disciples for the next generation. Here's Jude's first recognizable sign of error when compared to the truth

The truth joins us (v.3a), whereas the enemy divides us (v.4a)

What is 'the faith'? The apostle Paul helps us here from 1 Cor. 15:1-4

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

This is "the faith" not a faith. Jesus is not an option on the smorgasbord of religious choices. This faith is about Jesus, the Son of God who became a human being for the sole purpose of living a sinless life and to die in our place for our sins on the cross, proving He was the Son of God by being victorious over death. 'Common' salvation means shared salvation. It joins us to Jesus and to all Jesus' followers ever since. We are joined together in Christ with Jude, Paul, Barnabas, John, James, Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, Jim Elliott, Hudson Taylor, Billy Graham, John MacArthur, John Piper. We share Christ together through the Spirit because we believe the faith as first shared by the apostles.

Since we have such a strong historical tie to all these, the enemy has to sneak in and carefully cause us to question some of these elementary truths, which will divide us. Paul wrote Galatians because false teachers had crept in there and divided Jewish believers and Gentile believers. In 2:4 he wrote

some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

Slaves to the Jewish traditions that Jesus previously exposed but Jewish legalists convinced even Peter and Barnabas to separate themselves from eating with Gentiles. The enemy loves to bring division to those who believe the faith by defining the faith more meticulously as the standard for genuine faith (denomination, bible translation, worship style, gender roles, eschatology, doctrinal preferences) or by loosening our positions on theological issues. This is another way we see the difference according to Jude;

The truth is trustworthy whereas lies are deceptive (v.3b, 4b)

When Paul says the faith is entrusted to us it clearly implies it is trustworthy. The gospel is reliable. The test of the faith is the message we proclaim today still the message first told. It's historically reliable. Lee Strobel was not the first person to investigate the historical claims of the gospel and come away believing the faith. Many have. Many still deny Him and try to undermine his life, his teachings or even his existence. But the resurrection separates Jesus from all other would-be Saviours. His crucifixion is meticulously detailed and acknowledged in other historical sources paving the way for the accuracy of the resurrection accounts

Yet we must still grow in this knowledge because Jude says we have to 'contend' for the faith. This is the word we get in English for 'agonize'. In the New Testament times 'agonizo' meant to wrestle with. It was often used in athletics to describe a contest between two opponents. Why does Jude use that word here? Because we live in a world dominated by non-believers who unwittingly are being deceived by Satan himself. With every new generation there are people who undermine the reality of Jesus and seek to attack His followers.

That's why false teachers have to creep in. They look normal, are usually very pleasant and often very flattering to gain our confidence. Listen to Paul in Rom. 16:17

¹⁷ I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. ¹⁸ For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

One of the ways these false teachers divide churches through deception is by accusing the true leaders of being the false teachers. This happened to Paul all the time. So he has to say things like this in 1 Thes. 2:2

as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. ³ For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

Notice how Paul defends himself here: look at the way I have conducted myself with a life of holiness. This is another sign Jude points out here:

The truth produces holiness whereas rejecting Christ produces sinfulness (v. 3b, 4b)

There are three characteristics that Paul says separate the faithful from the faithless. Godliness, gracious and obedient.

⁴ For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Then they should be obvious to spot right? Not right away because remember they slipped in unnoticed. Listen to Paul in 2 Cor. 11 expose the false apostles who had convinced some of the Corinthians that he was the false apostle!

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

They start out as if they are righteous but over time, as Jesus said, they will be known by their fruit. We'll see more about what their godlessness looks like as we get further into letter. But here Paul says they '*change the grace of God into a license for sin*'. We see this today. Some believers excuse their sin because we have grace. They say things, 'I know what the Bible says but it feels right'. Or 'Yes but God is a god of love. He doesn't want me unhappy.' Or 'We have to look at the way culture has changed over the years and adapt and be more accepting.'

Using logic, reason and emotions we exchange grace for unbiblical behaviour. And when we do we deny the Lordship of Jesus. Jesus is Lord. His ways are right. If we disagree with what Jesus says, we're in the wrong. Jude says we need to contend with them, to wrestle with for the truth. Because they masquerade themselves by twisting the truth only for their own means. They sound spiritual, but they're message is subtle at first to hide the fact that they actually deny Jesus as Lord.

While they can do a lot of damage, Jude also reassures his readers that they can't win, God does. So stick with the truth and remember what happens to those who deny Jesus

Be Assured that the Gospel Message Doesn't Change **(5-7)**

Jude's readers must have been primarily Jewish Christians because he uses the Old Testament for illustrations and we'll see later on that he even quotes a Jewish extra-biblical piece of literature. He first reminds them of the exodus and that

Faith alone results in eternal salvation (v.5)

⁵ Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt,

The 10 plagues and the parting of the Red Sea were all one giant act to save Israel from the Egyptians. God told Moses what He was going to do. Then Moses told the people what God said to him. The people had to believe by faith in God's words that God would save them. God's words promised what He would do for them and faith in His words brought them out of Egypt. Faith in the message of God resulted in their being delivered.

Some of our translations say the Lord saved and some say Jesus saved his people out of Egypt. With 20/20 hindsight and a fuller knowledge of the deity of Jesus, both are correct. Listen to how Paul explains some of the exodus in 1 Cor. 10,

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Paul has no problem understanding that the pre-incarnate Jesus was there and involved in saving the Israelites at the Exodus. Faith in the Lord's words saves you. But Jude points out not everyone believed. When Moses was receiving the 10 commandments many rebelled and coerced Aaron to build the golden calf as the god that saved them. Later on when the 12 spies went into the land in Numbers, only Caleb and Joshua believed that God would give them what he promised them. As a judgment for their unbelief, none of those over 20 would receive what God promised. Belief alone in God's Words results in receiving the promises of God.

Unbelief results in eternal loss (vv.6-7)

The Israelites who failed to believe what God promised lost out on God's promises forever. This is the point Jude wants to make. And now he adds two more illustrations from the Old Testament.

⁶ And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. ⁷ In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

Who were these fallen angels who left their positions of authority? Most likely Jude is referring to Gen. 6, where we read that the sons of God went and cohabited with the daughters of men. This contributed towards the world becoming so evil God saw the need to wipe it out, except for Noah and

his family. Angels who left heaven because of unbelief lost out on heaven for all eternity and are locked up awaiting judgment day.

Sodom and Gomorrah were beautiful Eden like places to live but the people rejected God and His ways. God had to send His own angels who looked like men, to rescue Lot and his daughters from the sexual perversion the men of Sodom wanted to do to them. They didn't even hide what they wanted to do. So evil was that place. So God wiped out this Eden like environment as judgment. Unbelief in God results in a loss of being in God's garden for all eternity.

The point of all this? False teachers can't win just as all examples of ungodly people who tried to rebel against God did not win. Judgment awaits all those who reject or rebel against God. But that may not happen for awhile. So God's people need to contend for the faith.

The word for 'contend earnestly' is the same word Paul uses in 1 Tim. 6:11 but first listen to the context in which Paul uses it starting at v.2:

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. ³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴ they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵ and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Same context; false teachers.

To contend earnestly means to wrestle and fight. Reading our bibles and spending time in prayer every day can even be a battle. Fight the temptation to follow your own pursuits. Grow in godliness; it will result in the happiness you want in life. God wired us to be more satisfied by Him than anything this world has to offer.

Jude encouraged us to grow in our salvation so we can be more aware of subtle yet deadly manipulations of the gospel. Satan is working hard to undermine the gospel and those who transmit it faithfully so we should not be surprised that spiritual growth is going to take some hard work on our part. Let's be contenders for the faith and not be ashamed of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message, please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net