

HOW TO FIGHT FAITHFULLY FOR THE FAITH (Jude 3-16)

I have told once before of the receptionist who answered the phone, “Fidelity Insurance Corporation, how may I help you?” The female caller seemed a bit nervous, but she managed to ask her question. She said, “I would like to talk to someone about, uh, about insuring my husband’s fidelity.”

I imagine there have been many wives and husbands, too, who have wanted to insure their spouse’s fidelity.”

It occurs to me that the term *insurance* is somewhat of a misnomer. The fact is, home owner’s insurance will not keep your house from burning down or blowing away in a tornado. Were a tornado to rip through town, it would not discriminate between houses that were insured and those that were not.

Likewise, medical insurance does not protect you from getting sick. Automobile insurance does not keep you from having a wreck or prevent your car from being stolen. Life insurance does not remove the possibility of you dying. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you are going to die whether you have life insurance or not. The only thing insurance does is pay you or your beneficiary after the thing you didn’t want to happen has already happened.

The only one who can ensure a husband’s fidelity is the husband. The word *fidelity* means *loyalty* or *faithfulness*. We are going to talk about faithfulness this morning—faithfulness to God. We are to be faithful in our discipleship, faithful in our worship, faithful in our stewardship, faithful in our service, and faithful to God in many other ways.

According to today’s text, we are to be faithful to fight. In Jude 3, Jude appealed to his reader “to contend for the faith.” *To contend* is *to fight*, or *to compete*, or *to struggle*. It is used only this one time in the entire NT. Here, we are instructed “to contend for the faith.” The term, *the faith*, refers to the body of truth that we as Christians are to believe and practice. We are to protect it from being corrupted, or mis-interpreted, or mis-taught.

In today’s passage, Jude tells us to contend for the faith, and then he contends for it by taking on the false teachers. In this passage, Jude pulls no punches. He lets the false teachers have it with full force. Let’s look at vv. 3-16.

From this passage I want to point out four ways that we can ensure that we are fighting faithfully for the faith.

We Must Do What We Need to Do, Not What We Want to Do

Jude’s original intention was to write a letter focusing on the glory, wonder, and beauty of our salvation. That was what he wanted to do. Before he wrote that letter, however, he became aware of the activity of false teachers. He knew he needed to warn the church. He sacrificed what he wanted to do in order to do what he needed to do.

Jude could have gone ahead and did what he was eager to do. He could have pretended the situation wasn’t all that bad. He could have rationalized. He could have

said to himself, “Well, what I want to write about is important, too. I’ll address that later.”

No. He wrote that he found it **necessary** to address what was going on. This was a time-sensitive matter that couldn’t wait. He needed to act and act immediately.

When the spiritual welfare of people is at stake, when the message of the gospel is being threatened with distortion, we can’t act as though everything is just fine.

The United States military has various defense condition levels called Defcon, and those levels range from 1 to 5. Defcon 5 is peacetime. Defcon 1 means that nuclear war is imminent; you better find yourself a bunker. The highest level of readiness we have ever gone to is Defcon 2, and that was during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Today, we are Defcon 4. It is the Joint Chiefs of Staff who determine the threat level.

Jude looked around at what was taking place. He saw that false teachers had crept in to the church, and he realized he needed to sound the alarm. He couldn’t just hope they went away. He couldn’t stick his head in the sand like an ostrich and pretend all was well. He had to act; he had to let the church know of the threat they faced.

If the church had Defcon levels with Defcon 1 meaning the Antichrist was about to take over, I would say we are at a Defcon 2, and that is serious. The Church of Jesus Christ is under attack at home and abroad. Christians, in large numbers across the globe, are being persecuted. Here at home, the persecution of Christians is not as intense, but there is a war of worldviews that is being waged. False teachers can be found both in and outside of the church.

This is not the time to pretend all is well. This is not a time to amuse ourselves or entertain ourselves. This is a time to act. This is a time to fight. Instead of doing what we want to do, it is time to do what we need to do.

If we are going to fight faithfully for the faith . . .

We Must Affirm the Lordship of Jesus Over All Things

Look at v. 4. Jude was describing the false teachers who had crept in, and one of the things he noted is that they “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” Unlike them, we are to own Him and affirm Him as our only Lord and Master.

He is not our Lord among other lords. We do not serve multiple masters. You may have a boss to which you answer, but he or she is not your master. You have other authority figures in your life, but none of them are worthy of your complete and total allegiance. You have no other relationship in life that is comparable to this one. You may be an employee to a boss. You may be a student to a teacher. You may be a citizen to an elected official. You may be a soldier to a commanding officer. You may be a patient to a physician. You may be an athlete to a coach.

What are you and I to Jesus? Jude gave us a hint as he began his little letter. In the opening words, he wrote, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ.” The word he used is often translated as *slave*. Jesus is your only Master, and we are His servants, even His slaves. Our goal is to please Him and Him alone.

There is a hymn in our hymn book that we do not sing often, but it is one of my

favorites. I invite you to look at it as I read the lyrics. It is hymn #105, "He Is Lord." You may know the chorus, but it is the verses that make the chorus so powerful.

Emptied of His glory; God became a man,
To walk on earth in ridicule and shame.
A Ruler, yet a Servant; a Shepherd, yet a Lamb;
A Man of Sorrows, agony and pain.

Humbled and rejected, beaten and despised.
Upon the cross the Son of God was slain.
Just like a lamb to slaughter, a sinless sacrifice;
But, by His death His loss became our gain.

Satan's forces crumbled like a mighty wall.
The stone that held Him in was rolled aside.
The Prince of Life in glory was lifted over all,
Now earth and heaven echo with the cry.

He is Lord; He is Lord!
He has risen from the dead
And He is Lord!
Every knee shall Bow,
Every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord.

Since Jesus is our Savior and Lord, since He is our only Master and Commander, when Jesus says, "Take that hill!", we take that hill.

There is a third thing we are to do if we are to fight faithfully for the faith.

We Must Stand for the Truth and Against False Teachers

If you and I are to stand for the truth, this requires that we know the truth. In this short letter, Jude references Old Testament stories. He brings up the Exodus, but instead of saying that God delivered His people, he specifically says that it was Jesus who saved a people out of Egypt.

He refers to the OT story of Sodom and Gomorrah. He uses a story outside of the OT Scriptures that was part of a Jewish text that didn't make it into the canon of Scripture. He uses the stories of Cain, Balaam, and Korah to make his case who were all part of three additional OT stories. He quotes from another extra-biblical source when he tells his reader what Enoch supposedly prophesied.

My point is that Jude knew the Scripture, and he knew what other Jewish writers had written. He was able to stand for the truth because he knew the truth.

You and I cannot stand for that which we do not know. If we are going to stand for the Bible, we need to know the Bible. If we are going to stand for the Christian faith, we must know what our faith teaches. If we are to stand for Jesus, we must know Jesus. We

can only stand for that which we know, and if we are to know it, we must study it.

You can't put a Bible under your pillow and hope to absorb it by osmosis. You must pick it up and read it.

It always surprises me how well some people know pop culture. They know the name of actors, singers, performers, the shows and movies they have been in, the songs they have recorded and even the lyrics to those songs. How do they know that stuff? They listen. They tune in. They pay attention to what is being said and sung.

We need to tune in to this book and pay attention.

It has often been observed that treasury agents are taught what real money looks like so that when they come across counterfeit money, it is easily recognizable. They don't study counterfeit bills. They study the real thing.

If you want to be able to spot error and be able to identify false teaching, study the real thing. To stand for the truth, you and I have to know the truth.

Notice also, if we are to stand against false teachers this requires that we speak the truth. You and I were taught to be polite, and we were taught that to be polite we must not say negative things about people or to people. When it comes to standing against false teachers, we have to get over our habit of being polite.

When Carolyn and her pest control employees are called out to get rid of bugs and crawling pests, they are not polite about it. They are ruthless. They do whatever they must to exterminate the invaders who crept in to a place they do not belong.

You and I have been called by God to exterminate false teaching and to get rid of those who have crept in to a place they do not belong—the Church of Jesus Christ. We do that by speaking the truth.

We are not going to do a close study of each verse in our text, but I want you to notice how brutally honest Jude is as he contends for the faith. Notice the things he says about the false teachers in v. 4 (They crept in; they have been marked for condemnation; they are ungodly; they pervert the grace of God and deny Jesus' absolute Lordship).

In vv. 5-7, Jude uses multiple examples of judgment. The generation that was liberated from Egypt all died in the wilderness because of their disobedience. The disobedient angels are being kept in chains awaiting Judgment Day. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are an example of being punished with fire.

In v. 10, Jude compares the false teachers to unreasoning animals. He says, "Woe to them!" He likened them to Cain who killed his brother out of jealousy. The false teachers are treacherous and not to be trusted. Balaam became a prophet for hire. He was paid in order to pronounce a curse on God's people. False teachers are in it for the money. Although he was unsuccessful, Korah attempted to lead a rebellion against Moses, God's assigned leader. It didn't work out so well for him and those who followed him. The earth opened up and swallowed them. You can read about that in Numbers 16.

Look at the terms he uses to describe the false teachers—hidden reefs, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds, fruitless trees, wild waves, and wandering stars (vv. 12-13).

He focuses on their ungodliness in v. 15. In v. 16 he labels them as grumblers, malcontents, and loud-mouthed boasters.

I need to point out that Jude was not addressing people by name. He was describing a nameless group of people. I don't think we can use this text as justification to go out and be utterly obnoxious towards certain individuals.

Elsewhere, the Bible calls upon us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). To speak truth without love is to be brutal. To speak lovingly without truth is to be sentimental. To be speak truth and to wed that truth with love is to be faithful to God's call that we contend for the faith.

Whether or not we realize it, we come across false far more often than we think. We are confronted with false teaching regularly. All you have to do is turn on the TV, watch it for ten minutes, and you will hear it.

Some years ago, Rick Warren preached a message entitled, "Myths That Make Us Miserable." He said:

Have you ever been sick in bed for a day and watched a day's worth of talk shows? That will make you sick. I had the flu a while back and wrote down ten talk show myths. These myths really aren't funny. They're projected as truth.

1. All your problems are somebody else's fault.
2. This world owes you happiness.
3. You'll be happy if you get whatever you want.
4. There is never any reason to feel guilty.
5. Man is basically good and unselfish.
6. All beliefs are equally valid.
7. Pornography and perversion are innocent.
8. You can have it all.
9. You shouldn't have to wait for anything.
10. Because you are God, the answer lies within you.

People are falling for these myths, and these myths are making people miserable because they are not true. You can't base your life on falsehood and expect things to turn out well.

I want to point out three false teachings that you may encounter in the church. The first false teaching is moralism. Basically, it says, "Let's all be good boys and girls, and God will save us and bless. So, if we will just go to church, keep our noses clean, and play nice, all will be just fine."

That is moralism. It doesn't take into account that we are sinners in need of a Savior. It makes Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave unnecessary. It is a false gospel.

Another false teaching is legalism. In legalism, we have to earn God's favor by following the rules. We have to go to church. We have to wear the right clothes. We have to tithe. We have to serve. We have to do what the pastor says or God's gonna get us. Such teaching makes a mockery of grace. It denies the truth of Galatians 5:1, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

On the other end of the spectrum is the false teaching of antinomianism. That is a big word that means “no law.” In other words, since God has saved you and forgiven you of your sin, you can do whatever you want. Sin no longer matters because it has all been forgiven. This gives you the license to do whatever you want to do.

This was the false teaching in Jude. Look again at v. 4. These false teachers taught that God saves the soul, so what we do with our bodies doesn't matter.

The Bible teaches that sin is a reality and by God's grace we can overcome it instead of allowing it to overcome us.

Know the truth. Speak the truth. That is how we contend for the faith.

We Must Realize Jesus the Judge and Judgment Are Coming

In our passage, Jude spoke much about Jesus' right to judge and the fact that judgment is coming.

- Verse 4 speaks of those who were designated for condemnation
- In v. 5, Jesus judged the those who were delivered from Egypt because they would not trust God and did not obey God.
- According to v. 6, the disobedient angels are awaiting judgment.
- Verse 7 teaches that Sodom and Gomorrah were judged, and they serve as a negative example to us.
- In v. 9, the angel Michael told the devil, “The Lord rebuke you.”
- As we saw in v. 12, Judgment came upon Korah and those who aligned with him.
- According to v. 13, utter darkness has been reserved forever for the false teachers.
- Verse 15 speaks of the execution of judgment.

Many people, Christians even, don't like to think about God being a judging God. In their minds, the concepts of God's wrath and judgment don't seem to fit with their view of God as being loving and merciful.

Theologian N. T. Wright help us put the two together. He wrote:

The biblical doctrine of God's wrath is rooted in the doctrine of God as the good, wise and loving creator, who hates—yes, hates, and hates implacably—anything that spoils, defaces, distorts, or damages his beautiful creation, and in particular anything that does that to his image-bearing creatures. If God does not hate racial prejudice, he is neither good nor loving. If God is not wrathful at child abuse, he is neither good nor loving. If God is not utterly determined to root out from his creation, in an act of proper wrath and judgment, the arrogance that allows people to exploit, bomb, bully and enslave one another, he is neither loving, nor good, nor wise.

The same goes with truth. If God is loving, He must not allow those who distort His truth or subvert the truth to go unpunished. Truth matters.

Jesus is the Judge. As the Judge, He will punish those who do what is wrong, and He

will reward those who do what is right. Let's close by look at the last page of the Bible. Turn to Revelation 22:11-12. Because Jesus, the Judge is coming back, and because He will both judge and reward, we need to contend for the faith until He comes.