

Praying to Contend for The Faith

Jude 1-4, 20-21

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(Summer Lock In, Saturday, July 28th, 2018)

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¹ Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. ...

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Introduction

Jude is about two things: assurance and vigilance.

1. *Assurance is a positive declaration intended to give confidence; a promise. [1, 24]*

¹ Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

God gives us assurance that intends to give us confidence that we are in Him as a promise. Our assurance is that it is God who keeps us. Jude's letter begins and ends with very comforting words to Christians.

In verse one, it says, "those who are *called, beloved...and kept.*" All three verbs are passive, meaning someone else is doing these actions. That someone else is God Himself. They stress the actions of God: God who calls, God who loves, and God who keeps. *We* are called, loved, and kept.

Jude begins and ends with this assurance that it is God who keeps us, but sandwiched between these assurances is his concern.

2. *Vigilance is the action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties [3]*

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

There is a warning for us so that we will be vigilant even though we have assurance. This is why verse three says that we need to fight and contend for the faith. The assured victory of believers does not mean that we do not have to fight to win. In a believer, there is both a sin nature and a Spirit's nature. Our two natures are in battle and there are many things in this world that lure us into temptation, yet the Spirit of God is with us. So, we have to fight.

Just because a brilliant commander of an army promises victory does not mean the troops can throw their weapons down. The promise of victory assumes valor in battle. When God promised that believers would be kept from defeat, His purpose is not that we lay down our sword and go on a vacation. His purpose is that we pick up the sword of the Spirit and look confidently to God for strength to fight and win. God's way is to give His people confidence that their faith will be victorious in the end and then send them to fight for it.

Outline of Jude

Call to contend for The Faith – Why we fight [1-3]

Challenges to contend for The Faith – What we fight against [4-6]

Charge to contend for The Faith – How to fight [17-25]

On the foundation of our assurance, we need to fight for our faith in vigilance. We are not going to wane or wimp out in hardships in our difficulties. We will overcome. If we are vigilant in our prayer, we can be vigilant in our daily life.

I. We are called to contend for The Faith [1-4]

A. Assurance of The Faith [1-2]

¹ *Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: ² May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.*

You are *called* by the Father. We need to *know whose we are*.

You are *beloved* by the Father because you are in Jesus Christ. As much as Jesus is loved by the Father, we are loved. *Know who you are*.

You are *kept* in the hands of the Father for Jesus Christ. *Know where you are*.

These are our assurances. Then, there is a call to vigilance or to fight.

B. Contending for The Faith [3]

³ *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*

The Faith - instead of just *faith* - is specifically talking about the once-for-all deliverance to the saints. God has given to us The Faith in Jesus Christ, in which our spiritual nature is born. This life of faith and spiritual nature is in connection with the Holy Spirit.

In Greek, the word “contend” (*agónizomai*) when verbalized, sounds like the word “agonizing”. It describes athletes who, in their efforts to win, find themselves intensely struggling, competing, even fighting with all their might. The word also means *effort*

expended in a noble cause. Thus, “contend” means to struggle with full effort in a noble cause. This is what Jude is after and we need this generation of Christians to contend by exerting maximum effort. The Christian faith in its fullness and completeness is worthy of our struggle. May Jude’s theme shake us from any complacency and bring us into prayer filled conformity.

When the Bible talks about the word “faith”, it usually talks about three things: (1) initial faith – salvation in Jesus Christ, (2) the condition of faith – constantly believing in our heart, and (3) the comprehensive life of faith –the summary of being a Christian.

This verse is mainly talking about the comprehensive life of faith, and to examine this, we need to look at the condition of our faith. We need to fight for The Faith.

C. Challenges to The Faith [4]

⁴For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

There are two threats to our faith: (1) those who pervert the grace of God in sensuality and (2) those who deny the Lord and only master, Jesus Christ. Certain people were influencing people with wrong teachings and wrong principles and it was getting into the hearts of the people. They were contending against the faith.

1. Perverting grace – sensuality

“Pervert” means to change or alter. Some influential Christian leaders were altering the intended effect of God’s grace. His grace leads us to salvation and to love and live for Christ, but they were perverting God’s grace in such a way that they were sinning rather than being sanctified.

“Sensuality” generally conveys loose living marked by sexual pleasure or greed. These influential people altered Christian freedom. They changed and transformed it into carnal license. This is the idea that the assurance of salvation can lead you to be able to do whatever you want rather than living thankfully for the LORD. We call it abusing the grace of God.

We all fail. There are two kinds of people who fail then ask for forgiveness, but their directions are totally different. One person struggles, fights, wants to live for the LORD, stumbles, then asks for forgiveness. Their direction is towards sanctification. They are using the grace of God to grow more like Christ for His glory. However, the other person is not fighting their own heart, sins, and then asks for forgiveness. Their direction is towards sensuality. They are abusing the grace of God.

Today, we see acceptance without direction or cause. Who, if left alone by the Holy Spirit, would not risk all that heavens hold for a moment of carnal pleasure? To be a Christian means being saved from sensuality to sanctification. John Calvin writes, “It is

bad to live under a prince who permits nothing but much worse to live under one who permits everything.” We live under a permissive time; we might call it the days of Jude.

2. Denying Lordship – rebellion toward God’s authority

Another challenge towards faith is rebellion towards God’s authority. By their teaching or carnal living, they reject that Jesus was their king. Christians willingly identify themselves under the authority of the Bible and the local church that teaches the Bible. But when we live to do whatever we want, we deny the authority of God.

The key to fight for this comprehensive life for faith is to constantly have our heart in the condition of faith. When that becomes habitual in our lives, it becomes our life and our character. A good illustration of a life of faith is when Peter walks on water. When he looks at Christ and Christ says, “Come,” Peter hears the Word of God and it enables him to walk on the water. But when Peter looks at the winds and the waves, he remembers that walking on water should be impossible. Faith changes to doubt. Our heart’s condition can constantly change depending on what we think because we have two natures and thoughts, constantly battling in our hearts.

We need to be in the condition of faith. What are we thinking about right now? Which nature is being stimulated to receive His grace to walk for Christ, in Christ? If we are constantly fighting to walk in faith, even if like Peter we doubt at times, that faith becomes habitual in our lives. It becomes a comprehensive life of faith.

II. We are called to pray to contend for The Faith [20-21]

A. Praying strengthens our heart to have faith, love, and hope [20-21]

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Verses 20 and 21 show us that prayer is related to faith, love, and hope. We can learn about what it means to have faith from 1 Corinthians 13 which also talks about faith, love, and hope.

B. Praying helps one’s heart to be in a condition of faith [20-21]

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 – ¹ *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ... ¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

In eternity, faith and hope and love abide. They will stay. Here, faith refers to the motive and condition of our hearts. The conditions of faith are trusting or not trusting, being hopeful or discouraged. We have two natures and two kinds of thoughts that stimulate our natures. What does it mean to have love? In 1 Corinthians 13, if you do not have a heart of love: you cannot pray, you cannot speak and minister to people, and you cannot give. Faith uses the same principle in that it is based on the condition of your heart to believe in God and Scripture.

What happens when our hearts are in the condition of faith? Prayer in faith receives mercy, grace, and power. It says so in Romans 8:16, "*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*". When we are in the condition of faith, the Holy Spirit is able to connect with and strengthen our spirit.

Therefore, prayer is the breathing of the Christian life. Why do we pray when God is sovereign? If we are victorious, why do we fight? We pray *because* God is sovereign. Just as we cannot stop breathing because God is the giver of life, we cannot stop praying because God is sovereign. The way He exercises sovereignty and gives us wonderful, great things in life is through prayer. Prayer is the breathing of Christian life, and breathing is the means God uses to give us life. It is a means of His grace. When we pray, our heart will come alive. Our hearts will be in the condition of faith.

C. Praying helps one to be built up in faith [20]

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

When we pray, our hearts will constantly be in the condition of faith. As you constantly pray, the constant condition of faith leads to character. Constant condition leads to consistent character of a man or woman of God. "Building up" means to engage in the building process of personal and corporate development. Through faith, through prayer, you receive God's grace and you persevere until the end. It all starts with our faith, dependency on God.

Jesus says to Peter in Luke 22:32, "*but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*"

Peter is going to fail and deny Jesus three times. Jesus warns Peter of this and says that He will pray for him and that his faith would not fail. Prayer strengthens faith. We need to pray for each other's faith. Also, prayer strengthens the heart of a believer to get up after failure and continue in perseverance by receiving God's grace. In John 21, Jesus meets the disciples and asks Peter, "*do you love me?*" three times because Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus wants to forgive Peter three times. Then, Jesus reinstates Peter as an apostle when He says, "*feed my sheep.*"

Though Peter failed, his heart was in the condition of faith. He was able to rise again. It becomes his character: he is a man of faith. For the rest of his life, he becomes a leader of the first century church and dies preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. As you go up and

down, you grow and go through the process to become a man or woman of God. The comprehensive life of faith is obtained by a constant fight for faith.

III. We are called to pray in the Spirit to contend for The Faith [20-21]

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Praying in the Spirit is *not* a special form of prayer, like speaking in tongues. In Ephesians 6:18, we should pray at all times in the Spirit. It's not talking about praying in tongues all the time in our daily life. In other words, all prayer should be in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit is not one form among several, but it is the way all prayer is to be offered. We will talk about three ways to pray in the Spirit.

A. Not in your fleshly nature – Repentance right away

Praying in the Spirit is not praying in the fleshly nature. Whatever we face, praying in the spirit is repenting right away.

B. In your spiritual nature – The Holy Spirit helps our heart

We see this in Romans 5:5, "*and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*" Through the Holy Spirit, God's love has been poured into our hearts. As we repent, God's love is poured into our hearts, so we are praying in our spirit's nature by help from the Holy Spirit.

C. Through the Word – How to pray in the Spirit

The same phrase is used in Ephesians 5:18-19, "*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart*". Paul is telling the Ephesian believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that everything they do would be from the Holy Spirit.

This passage parallels Colossians 3:16, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*" Instead of being filled with just singing, he calls for the believers to be filled with the Word of God when they sing. The way to pray in the Spirit is praying with the Word of God in your mind. This is the means of being filled with the Spirit: it uses the meditation of God in our minds so that our spirit will be filled with Spirit-given love given by the Spirit so we can pray.

We can see this again in Ephesians 6:17-18, "*and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints*". Be filled with God's Word. Coil your prayer around the Word of God. Pray as your heart is stimulated to love God, serve the Lord, of the topics

in the perspective of the Kingdom, through the desire the Holy Spirit gives to you. Pray in the Spirit through the Word of God.

Conclusion

Several years ago, I was doing marriage counseling for a missionary who had morally failed. His wife asks me, “what more can you say that he does not know?” It was not that he did not know something, so he committed moral failure. He knew it what was sin but committed it anyway. She questioned what use my counseling would be for him. I replied, “It’s not about knowing, but it’s about burning.” Whatever you know has to come down to your heart and it has to burn. A heart has to be in a condition of faith. As the Word of God goes into his heart, he will know and his heart will come alive. He will resist the temptation to sin, not out of feeling but out of a loving desire for the Lord. In a dry and barren heart, the Spirit uses the fiery Word of God that ignites itself through prayer in order to believe, to love, to hope. Then, the heart can change. A praying person becomes a contending person. A praying family becomes a contending family. A praying generation becomes a contending generation. Pray that each of you will contend for faith tonight through prayer in the Spirit so that your family and generation will be these things. Let’s pray.