

**Jude 1 – Contending for the Faith**  
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I'm so excited that we are beginning our study in the book of Jude in a sermon series called Contending For the Faith.

The Epistle of Jude is the next to last book in the Bible. It's a short book that most Christians are not very familiar with. The word epistle means letter. Most New Testament books were actually letters written to a specific person or church, but there are seven we call general epistles because they are written to a more general audience. Those seven are James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude.

The epistle of Jude is very relevant to the current times. Today's headlines reveal a world in moral chaos and confusion. Christians are becoming bombarded with challenges to their faith. More and more people are becoming anti-Christ, and therefore, anti-Christian.

From a believer's perspective, it may seem the world has never been further from God. But almost 2000 years ago, early Christian believers faced similar threats to their faith, grappling with contradictory teachings over Christian doctrine and struggling to live out their faith in a manner consistent with that doctrine.

Enter Jude. As an itinerant preacher and pastor, Jude travelled among several of the churches of the first century. One day, he began to write an encouraging letter to some of the churches he had visited, but his plans changed. He was startled by news that those churches were besieged by false teachers who were leading them away from the truth of God's grace and enticing them to live in a manner inconsistent with God's commands. So the Holy Spirit changed the topic of his letter,

In this letter, Jude urges us to contend for the faith – by fighting against false teachings and opposing those who are trying to deceive us. He also gives us a specific strategy for how to deal with false teachings.

In our time, there is no more relevant message for Christians than the message of Jude. As believers, he called us to “contend for the faith,” so it is essential we understand what we are fighting against and how to respond to those who attack the basic doctrines and teachings of the Christian faith.

So, who exactly is Jude? We see how he introduces himself in the first verse of Jude:

*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.*

Jude describes himself as a servant of Jesus and the brother of James. James was an apostle and leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Since Jude was the brother of James, that means that Jude was also a brother of Jesus since James is described as being the brother of Jesus. That would make Jude the brother of Jesus.

By the way – Jude is another form of the name Judas. Mark 6:1-3 says Jude is one of Jesus' brothers.

*Jesus came to His hometown, and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished. "Where did this man get these things?" they said. "What is this wisdom given to Him, and how are these miracles performed by His hands? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? And aren't His sisters here with us?" So they were offended by Him.*

Here's the thing: none of Jesus's siblings believed He was the Messiah. John 7:5 says:

*Even His own brothers did not believe in Him.*

Mark 3:20-21 says:

*One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon He and His disciples couldn't even find time to eat. When His family heard what was happening, they tried to take Him away. "He's out of his mind," they said.*

Contrary to many false gospels, Jesus did nothing as a child to make people think He was the son of God. He did no miracles. So – His own family did not believe in Him. Yet, after the resurrection, everything changed! Acts 1 tells about Jesus appearing to His disciples after the resurrection. Acts 1:12-14 says:

*Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

This is one of the most powerful proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: His brothers went from skeptics to believers. Including Jude! The changed life of Jude is amazing. As we've seen, he went from being a skeptic to a believer to being one of the 120 praying when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost. Jude was changed from a skeptic to a believer by the resurrection! And that resurrection power is still changing lives today.

Notice how Jude introduces himself. Not as the brother of Jesus, but as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ! The Greek word translated servant is *doulos* – one who voluntarily submits to the will of another. Jude had gone from a skeptic of Christ to a slave of Christ.

So, Jude wrote this letter, but who did he write to and why? We see who Jude wrote to in the rest of verse 1:

*To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:*

Jude is a general epistle written to everyone who has been called, loved and kept by God! That means it was written to you! Let's look these awesome truths about our identity in Christ because in order to contend for the faith we must know who we are in Christ.

### **1- Believers are called by God**

The word called means "invited." A calling is an invitation from God to accomplish His purpose. Here's some Bible truth about calling. We usually think of calling as a call to ministry. Acts 13:2 says:

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

In Romans 1:1 Paul said:

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—*

But in verses 5 and 6 he amplifies that by saying:

*Through Him and for His name's sake, we received grace and apostle-ship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

So we see that Paul's calling involved calling others to Christ. In other verses, the Bible says believers are called to be saints – called to be holy – called to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ – called to fellowship with Jesus.

1 Peter 2:9-10 says we are called by God to declare His praise.

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

2 Timothy 1:9 says:

*God has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace.*

1 Timothy 6:12 says:

*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.*

We are called by God to be saved, called to eternal life, and called to fight the good fight of faith!

Everything we do for God is by invitation, or calling. In fact, no one would even be saved if God did not call, or invite, them. You see, God is the initiator – He draws us. Jesus said in John 6:44

*No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him.*

God's part is to draw us to Himself. Our part is to respond to God's call.

## **2- Believers are kept by Jesus**

The word kept here means to guard – to take care of. In a letter about false teachers and apostasy, he wants to assure them that it is God who keeps them. Jude opens and closes his letter with God's keeping power. But that does not create a deterministic or fatalistic view. Yes, Jude 1:1 says we are kept by God, but verse 21 says:

*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*

So which is it? Does God keep us or do we keep ourselves? The answer is both. Just as we must respond to God's call, we must also respond to God's keeping power.

Thinking that it is all God would be like saying, "Since God is the giver of life, then I don't need to breathe." No. Breathing is the means that God uses to sustain life that He gives.

Likewise, God's keeping power is available to us, but we must keep ourselves in the love of God. But we don't have the ability to keep ourselves apart from Him! Our keeping is totally dependent upon His keeping. This is best seen in Philippians 2:12-13

*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

We don't work FOR our salvation – we work OUT our salvation. God works in us – then we work that out into our lives. But it is His power that gives us the power to work it out. So – why does God call us and keep us? Jude tells us it's because God loves us.

## **3- Believers are loved by God the Father.**

Love is the motivation for everything God does.  
 Because God loves us He sent His Son to die for us and save us.  
 Because God loves us He calls us to Himself.  
 Because God loves us He keeps us for Himself.  
 God loves us – not because we are so loveable – but because God is love. Love is not just one of His attributes; it is His nature.

God's love is free and uncaused. There is nothing that you can do to make God love you. God is not obligated to love us – it is His nature to love us. To be loved by God is to experience His grace, His favor, His blessing, His care, and His protection.

So, why did Jude write this letter to those who are called, loved and kept? One reason is to pronounce a blessing on us.

*2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.*

This blessing is for abundant mercy, peace and love. Grace is giving us what we don't deserve. Mercy is not giving us what we do deserve.

Peace comes as we experience God's love and mercy. Peace comes from the Hebrew word shalom and has a breadth of meaning, but particularly wholeness, wellness, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Jude is asking God to multiply His love, mercy, and peace on us. Asking God to be lavish. We need an abundance of God's mercy, peace, and love as we contend for the faith.

Not only did Jude write to bless his readers, but to warn them. Jude fiercely condemns certain people that he sees as a threat to the early Christian community.

*3 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.*

Jude originally intended to write about the salvation we share, but felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to urge them to contend for the faith – to fight for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints.

The faith Jude is talking about is not our individual faith in Jesus. He is speaking of the essential truths of the Gospel that all true Christians hold in common.

Essential Christian doctrine has been handed down from Jesus to His apostles who taught them to the early believers who passed them on to the next generation and to every generation thereafter in a living chain of believers that connects us today all the way back to Jesus.

Every generation has received this truth and has had to contend for it.

Now it's our turn! Why? Because the enemy is a deceiver and he uses false teachers to try to lead people into heresy.

There are many New Testament warnings about false teachers who taught heresy – false doctrine. 2 Peter 3:3 says:

*You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

The Bible predicts that there will be a great apostasy – or falling away from the faith – in the end times. Jesus said this about the end times in Matthew 24:10-13

*At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:3

*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. The NKJV says - Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first...*

We see this falling away happening today and it is ever increasing. It's popular to call it “deconstructing your faith.” You might as well call it deconstructing your life because when you turn from faith in God you turn from your hope in this life and the life to come!

But Jude warns us to contend for the faith rather than destroy our faith! He said to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Notice that this faith was delivered once for all. That means once for all time – there is no new faith. And it means once for all people – there not different ways of salvation. There is one way and that is through faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul tells us what this faith is.

*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. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. This is the gospel! This is the truth! This is the faith! Christ died for our sins! Christ was buried, but He rose from the dead. These are facts that will never change! But some people are trying to change that through their false teachings.

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.

Christianity had barely been established in the first century when it was bombarded by heresies that threatened to destroy it. A heresy is a belief that is not in line with established Biblical doctrine.

The first group of heretics were the Judaizers who followed Paul around teaching new believers that they had to keep the Jewish law to be saved. Acts 15 tells how the early church leaders got together in Jerusalem to contend with this error.

By the way, there are three major errors concerning God's law that have been around since the beginning of the church – and four books of the Bible were written to correct those errors. The first error is legalism which teaches we are saved by keeping the law. Paul addressed this in Romans. The second error regarding the law is called Galatianism. It teaches that we are saved by grace, but we only stay saved if we keep the law. Obviously, the book of Galatians addresses this.

The third error regarding the law is license. The biblical term for this is licentiousness. The theological term is antinomianism, which means against the law. This error teaches that we are not under the law – we are under grace - so it doesn't matter how we live. This heresy says that grace gives us a license to sin. It's interesting that both brothers of Jesus – James and Jude – address this in their letters.

Jude addressed the false teaching that grace gives us license to sin and the heresy that Jesus is not our Sovereign Lord. We will talk more about that – but I just want you to know those two things always go together! Show me people who believe grace gives us license to sin and those people will also not be submitted to the Lordship of Christ. You cannot be submitted to His Lordship and continue in willful and rebellious sin.

It is vitally important to know the truth and deal ruthlessly with heresy. You see – you are called, loved and kept by God! God loves us so much that He called us of darkness into His marvelous light – so we must contend for the faith by shining our light in the darkness! God loves us so much that He called us out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of His dear son – so we must contend with kingdom faith!

God loves us so much that He sent His Son to contend with and defeat Satan, sin, Hell and the grave! So we must love Him so much that we contend with and defeat every lie, every demonic deception, every false teaching, and every heresy. God loves us so much that He calls us to faith in Christ and keeps us in Christ – so we must keep on fighting the good fight of faith in the name of Jesus Christ!!! That is our high calling!