

2 – Beware of False Teachers
Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 10/16/22

This is week two of our study in the Jude called Contending For the Faith. Today's sermon is called Beware of False Teachers. Let's review first. Jude 1 says:

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

Jude describes himself as a servant of Jesus and the brother of James. Since James is described as being the brother of Jesus – that would make Jude the brother of Jesus. 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!

So, why did Jude write this letter to those who are called, loved and kept by God? One reason is to pronounce a blessing on us. Jude 2 says:

Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

Not only did Jude write to bless his readers, but to warn them. Jude 3 says:

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 planned to write an encouraging letter to some of the churches he had visited, but his plans were changed by the Holy Spirit. So, instead of writing a “feel good” letter, Jude urged the early believers and us today to contend for the faith – by fighting against false teachings and opposing those who are trying to deceive us. And as your pastor, I must fight the urge to always preach “feel good” sermons and actually teach you how to contend for the faith.

You might think that a letter from 2000 years ago has nothing to say to us today – but Jude is truly relevant to the current times. Like us, the early church faced threats from inside and outside the church and they had to struggle to live out their faith in a manner consistent with the truth.

In order for us to contend for the faith, we must understand what we are fighting against and how to respond to those who attack the basic doctrines and teachings of the Christian faith. Jude warns us to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. This faith we contend for is the body of Christian doctrine, the essential truths of the Gospel that all true Christians hold

in common. 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. We must contend for this faith!

Contend means to fight – to struggle – against adversaries of the faith. That includes spiritual warfare with Satan – the deceiver. It also includes taking a stand for truth.

To contend does not mean to be contentious. Contentious means to be combative and argumentative. Remember – the Word tells us to speak the truth in love! Colossians 4:5-6 says:

Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

1 Peter 3:15 says:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

We must learn how to contend for the faith without being contentious. In verse 4 Jude gives us the reason to contend for the faith.

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.

Notice that these false teachers secretly slipped into the church. They are what we call wolves in sheep's clothing. They try to look like the flock of God – but they are enemies of God. Jesus addressed this in Matthew 7:15-16

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.

This is why we try to take our time before putting someone in leadership. People might look good at first – but eventually their fruit will reveal who they really are – either good or bad. Here's the interesting thing about this passage – the verses before it say:

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

So, the false teachers Jesus warns us about are those who teach that there are many ways to God.

Or they teach universalism – a belief that everyone will be saved, whether you believe in Jesus or not.

We are not a church that teaches those errors – but there are churches and teachers that do. This is startling, but Dan Boerger sent me an article on a recent survey of American pastors conducted by the Cultural Research Center. About a third of 1000 “Evangelical” pastors believe that:

- Good people can earn their way to heaven
- There is no absolute moral truth – everyone must decide for themselves
- The Holy Spirit is not a person, but a symbol of God’s power.
- Sexual relations between 2 unmarried people who love each other is morally acceptable.

This is sad and means people really need to be aware of what is being taught in the pulpit of their church! If it does not line up with the word of God, run! Find a church that preaches the whole counsel of God.

These false teachers also come in the forms of authors, radio, TV and YouTube personalities, college and seminary professors, preachers, and other leaders in the church. It is one of Satan’s most effective tactics to disguise a false teacher as a messenger of truth.

It’s been that way from the beginning. 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. There are many New Testament warnings about false teachers who taught heresy – false doctrine.

The first 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 3 major errors concerning God’s law that have been around since the beginning of the church – and 4 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 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. Jude addressed the false teaching that grace gives us license to sin and the heresy that Jesus is not our Sovereign Lord. These false teachers were influenced by Gnosticism and its belief that since the grace of God covers our sin, we can sin as much as we want.

And these false teachers are a common belief among many people in the church today. This explains why people in churches today live together outside of marriage yet fail to see that choice as being inconsistent with their professed Christian faith. This is why many churches and denominations are rapidly caving in to the culture's views on homosexuality, gender identity, and other sins. But grace is not a license or a permission to sin. In fact, Romans 6:1-2 says:

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Certainly not! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Not only is grace not a license to sin, but Titus 2:11-13 says:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The truth about grace is the exact opposite of what the false teachers were teaching.

Gnostics also believed that Jesus was only one of many ways or stages between the evil of this world and God. They did not believe He was the sovereign Lord. People today try to water down exactly who Jesus is because by doing so they water down His commands. As a result, it becomes easier to ignore those parts of His words they do not want to obey because, if we can lessen His position, we reduce His authority over us. But Paul warned the believers in Acts 20:29-31

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!

The sad thing is that these adversaries are not from outside the church – they are from the inside! You can always detect them because they always try to draw people to themselves, rather than to the Lord or to the church.

False teachers do not consider themselves to be outside of the church – but they consider themselves to be elite teachers who have special knowledge that the pastors, elders and church members do not have. So, you must be on guard and you must contend for the faith lest you get caught up in it.

That's why Jude now warns us with 3 familiar historical examples of people who fell away from the faith rather than contending for the faith. Jude 5 says:

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered His people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

The Children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, but many did not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief. Jude is giving us a warning – it’s one thing to start a journey with God – it’s another thing to finish! Those who endure to the end will be saved! Jude 6 says:

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these He has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Jude is talking about fallen angels. Isaiah 14 teaches us about Lucifer’s rebellion against God. When he rebelled, one-third of the angels rebelled with him. They are what we now call demons. Their fall was due to pride. But Genesis 6 talks of angels who fell because of lust. Genesis 6:1-4 (Good News Translation) says:

When people had spread all over the world, and daughters were being born, some of the heavenly beings saw that these young women were beautiful, so they took the ones they liked. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever; they are mortal. From now on they will live no longer than 120 years." In those days, and even later, there were giants on the earth who were descendants of human women and the heavenly beings.

These are the fallen angels that Jude says did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these He has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Jude does a play on words here by saying that since the angels did not keep their God-given position – God will keep them in chains.

Jude is warning us that if pride and lust could cause angels to fall and be judged by God – then pride and lust can cause us to fall and be judged.

Jude’s third example was the well-known story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 and 19. Jude 7 says:

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.

The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah that brought about their destruction included, but was not limited to, the sin of homosexuality. The Greek word translated “perversion” in verse 7 means literally “went after strange flesh,” which may refer to the Sodomites’ desire for sex with angels (in contrast to the story of angels desiring sex with humans).

Jude’s purpose in these last two examples is to point out that the false

teachers violated God's created order, and as a result they will suffer the punishment of eternal fire. So now – beginning in verse 8 – Jude applies these 3 examples of falling away to the false teachers.

In the same way, these people—who claim authority from their dreams—live immoral lives, defy authority, and scoff at supernatural beings.

By the way – beware of people who only receive direction from dreams. Dreams can be of God and God can speak through dreams. But whatever is said in a dream must line up with God's Word!

Jude shows us that the false teachers committed the same sins as those who were judged in the examples he cited. He lists 4 specific sins the false teachers committed.

1. Sexual Immorality
2. Rebelliousness. They defy God's authority, the authority of His Word, and those God has set in places of authority.
3. They scoff at supernatural beings

Jude 9 says – *They scoff at supernatural beings, but even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

It is not exactly clear what Jude meant by this statement or in what manner the false teachers scoffed at heavenly beings. The word translated by the NIV as "heap abuse on" typically means to slander. Jude referred to the example of how the Archangel Michael refused to speak slanderously of Satan (based on a story found in the apocryphal book The Assumption of Moses).

The lesson of the story is not, as some erroneously conclude, that Michael treated Satan with respect and therefore we should, too. It also does not mean that we should not resist the devil, because the Bible explicitly tells us to resist the devil. Instead, Jude emphasizes that Michael fights Satan based on the Lord's authority, not in reliance upon his own self-assumed authority.

While we are uncertain how the false teachers blasphemed angels, the point Jude was making is that they claimed their own authority over the celestial beings. They usurped the authority of God and tried to be a law unto themselves, thinking they had the power to condemn angels by their own authority.

For us today, this is a reminder that we too are not a law unto ourselves. In our culture, we express it as "having our own truths." Truth, however, is defined by God, and it remains truth regardless of how culture tries to change it. There are no individual "truths" that each of us can adopt for our own selfish purposes.

Jude said in verse 10:

Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals — these are the very things that destroy them.

4. Their fourth sin was Ignorance of the Truth

The false teachers spoke against the truths of Scripture because they did not understand those truths. Instead, they taught out of their own sinful understanding and those things turned out to be the very things that would destroy them.

In verse 11, Jude declared “woe” or destruction upon them and cited three Old Testament examples to show why their future was one of destruction and judgment:

Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.

The story of Cain’s murder of Abel is told in Genesis 4:1-15 and identifies Cain, not only as one who rejected God’s authority, but also as a murderer and sinner. Jude said the false teachers had “taken the way” of Cain by imitating his jealousy and wickedness.

Beware of jealousy! Cain’s jealousy led to anger and then to murder! Undealt-with jealousy is a killer! James 3:14-16 says:

If you have bitter jealousy and contention in your hearts, do not pride yourselves on it and thus be false to the Truth. This wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and contention there will also be confusion and all sorts of evil and vile practices.

The story of Balaam is told in Numbers 22-24. When the Israelites attempted to pass through the land of Moab on their way to the Promised Land, Balak, the Moabite king, tried to hire Balaam to curse the Israelites and thus allow the Moabites to defeat them. But Balaam was warned by God and refused to do it.

Although Balaam never cursed Israel, Balak kept offering him money, so Balaam came up with another way to defeat the Israelites. Balaam encouraged Balak to entice the Israelites with Moabite women, drawing them into sexual immorality and eventually idol worship. As a result, the Lord’s anger burned against Israel and a plague killed 24,000 people.

Beware of teachers who only teach for money. Also – keep yourself from the love of money, because 1 Timothy 6:10

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.

Jude's last example is Korah's rebellion. Jude 11 says:

Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

In Numbers 16, Korah enticed 250 leaders to follow him in a rebellion against Moses, God's chosen leader. In Numbers 16:3, Korah said:

The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?

False teachers always have partial truth. It was true that all of Israel was set apart to God and He was with all. But Moses did not set himself above Israel, God chose him to lead.

So rebelling against God's chosen leaders is rebelling against God.
 The result of this rebellion was that all the rebels were destroyed.
 The way of rebellion is the way of destruction.
 The way of jealousy is the way of destruction.
 The way of greed is the way of destruction.
 Believing the lies of false teachers leads to destruction.

These are the ways of the enemy!
 He is the one who steals, kills and destroys!

But Jesus came to give us life and life more abundant!
 We do not have to live in fear of falling or destruction!
 We do that by contending for the faith rather than falling away from faith.