

Tonight we finish our race...our journey through Jude...and it's fitting, I believe, that we return to the image we've been using throughout the series.



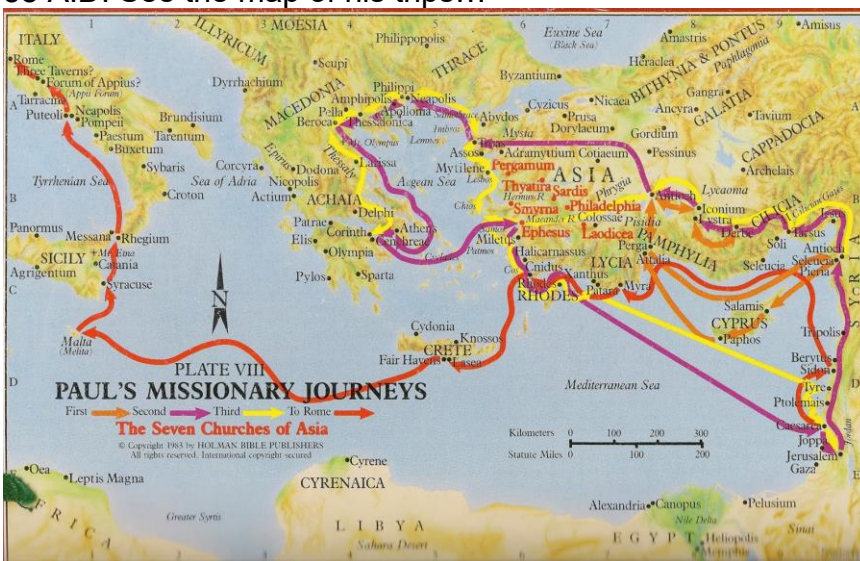
That is “Contending.” Jude said that we must “contend for the faith.” ***e-PAG-ōh-Nizomai*** means to agonize in battle or in athletics to hold a position or straining toward the finish line.

Now you'll remember Jude is the half-brother of Jesus and **he had intentions** of writing to the persecuted Christians of Asia Minor about the joys of salvation, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't let him. Instead, he said, “I have no choice but to tell you to...”

Jude 1:3-4

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.

These men were messing up the persecuted Christians living in Asia Minor. Remember, these believers that Jude is writing too were the fruit of the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys from 46-58 A.D. See the map of his trips...



See this map showing the churches of the NT spread out in Asia Minor...



Things had changed big-time in the 10-20 years since those churches had been established and it's because the truth was being distorted by false teachers that Jude says, "Be on guard...be aware of these fakes who are getting you off course. So, Jude gives O.T. examples of what happens to people who distort and reject God's truth: Cain, Sodom and Gomorrah, the children of Israel in the wilderness desert, etc. And Jude describes what will happen to these false teachers and all who pervert the things of God... God is going to execute judgment..."

Jude 1:15

¹⁵to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Jude has laid out the bad news for these false teachers and all who reject his brother...but WHAT ABOUT THE BELIEVER? What about us? Well, that's what we'll see tonight as we conclude this book...

Jude 1:20-25

²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. ²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Now I want to show you an outline for where we're headed tonight. Jude, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was given 7 admonitions for how we are to live and what we are to do as Christians AS WE CONTEND FOR THE FAITH. This is beautiful!

What Are We To Do?

1. Build yourselves in faith
2. Pray in the Holy Spirit
3. Keep yourself in the love of God
4. Wait for Jesus
5. Have mercy on those who doubt
6. Snatch others from the fire

7. Show mercy with fear by hating sin

Take a look at this picture again...and keep this in mind as we tackle these 7 action plans of a Christian...



You see, they are all actions... "DOING SOMETHING."
We're not idle! See it again...notice the words in Bold.

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-

You see the Christian life is BEING and DOING. Our position in Christ is the fact that when we get saved, He gives us His righteousness, that's called imputation. He places on us His righteousness and then He give us His Spirit so that we can GO MAKE DISCIPLES. We're to be in a **state of action...** We're to be GOING. That's the Great Commission, right? "GO" and make disciples of all nations! That's our job...to GO! (At work, Facebook, Ball fields, studios) And it's in our GOING that we are contending for the faith...running hard...



And that's why I believe the Holy Spirit inspired Jude to write what he did to these persecuted Christians. They were under tremendous pressure and yet, they have to keep running for Christ. And Jude knows it isn't easy so he encourages them by calling them: "Beloved." And then begins the list of "Actions."

Jude 1:20

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

And there's the first two "Actions" as we CONTEND for the faith... We're to... #1...

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So how do we build ourselves up in the faith? Well, how do you build up your bodies? You exercise them. And you can use weights or running or even your own body mass...like Pilates.



But, you work out and break down the muscles and when you do, you actually build them up... And that's what we're to do to our faith...**BUILD IT UP.** How?

By going to the gym. The gym for Christians? What's that? **THE BIBLE.** We build ourselves up in the faith by becoming a student of the Word of God. Now, I know we can also listen to Christian music, come to church and do a whole host of other things...and all of those are good...they are like weights in the GYM...but, **THE MOST** important piece of equipment in the gym for Christians is **SCRIPTURE.** **Now church family...let me tell you the categorical truth. I have yet to meet a strong, fruitful Christian who doesn't read and study the Bible.**

Growth is the expectation for the Christian Life. The Chinese Christians have a saying, according to Watchman Nee, the fantastic Chinese Preacher: "No Bible, No Breakfast." If we followed that principle in America, I believe there would be a lot of hungry people who had no breakfast.

We're supposed to study Scripture.

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

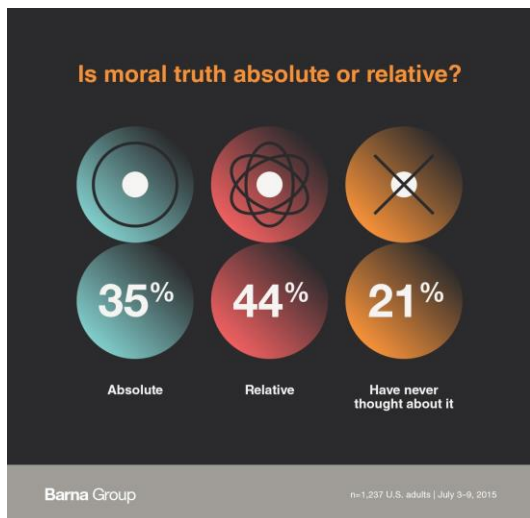
Why do we study Scripture...

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

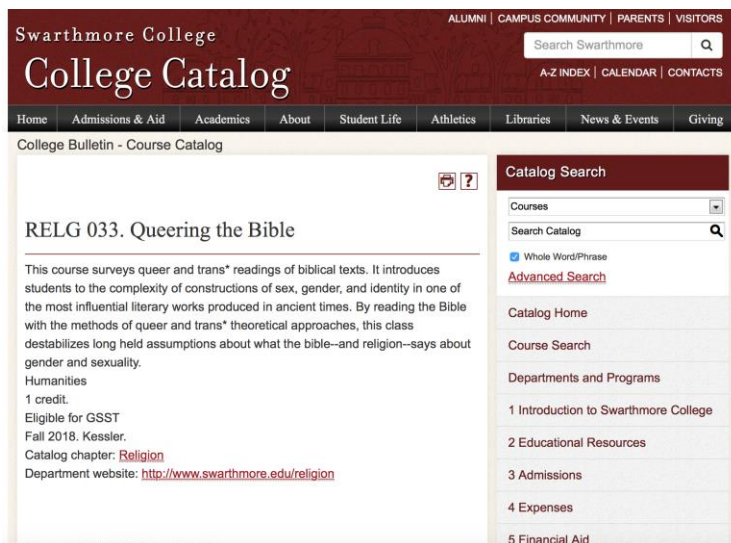
You see, it's **the Word of God that's the key to building ourselves up in the faith.** Without the Word of God to guide us, we're going to fail... But, here's something critical...we've got use the equipment correctly. We must correctly handle the Bible. That means we must interpret it correctly.

I titled the message: "Does Your Faith Match the Bible." But, here's the problem...



You see, **you and I don't get to interpret the Bible in any old way that suits me.** We don't get to ask, "What does it mean to you?" ...as if our interpretation is divinely inspired. Do you understand...my interpretation is only right, if it matches with what the Holy Spirit intended. We don't get to decide what a passage means...because, quite simply, the passage **MEANS WHAT IT MEANS.**

I continue to be blown away by **people who take the Word of God and twist it** to mean anything that want it to mean...to suit their own agendas...their own lifestyles or to salve their conscience. One area I continue to see is the area of sexuality. I'm amazed at how supposed Christians continue to espouse passages on homosexuality in the New Testament and say, "God only meant it's wrong if you aren't being faithful to one partner. As long as you are faithful to one partner, God is okay with it." Folks, that's not what those passages mean and you know it. And **people who are fast and loose with the Scripture are throwing weights around and their getting people hurt.**



Like the students at Swarthmore College about 11 miles southwest of Philadelphia, where "Queering the Bible" is a class being taught.

Oh this is so dangerous! Let me show you what Dr. David Black says:

"Apart from the Word of God read and studied, examined and expressed with clarity in preaching and teaching, the church ceases to be the church, formed and reformed by that Word. Instead it begins to talk to itself, echoing the language of the world..." Dr. David Alan Black, Professor of New Testament and Greek, SEBTS

I believe we are echoing the language of the world in so many areas. What it means to be a Christian, what it means to be a man or a woman. What it means to be holy. What love really is?

Listen, there are rules for interpreting Scripture...just like there are rules for the gym. These rules are called the **Principles of Hermeneutics**, which is the art and science of studying the text of the Bible. Here they are from Dr. Black:

“6 Principles of Hermeneutics (Interpreting the Bible Correctly),” Dr. David Alan Black

1. Survey the Historical Context (author, audience, date, occasion, purpose).
 2. Observe the Larger Literary Context (Don't "proof text")
 3. Resolve Any Significant Textual Issues (i.e., Study the passage using the original language)
 4. Determine the Meaning of the Crucial Words (This is the lexical or "dictionary" meaning)
 5. Analyze the Syntax (tense, voice, mood, person, number and case of individual words)
 6. Determine the Literary Structure (Poetry, Prophecy, History, Parables, etc.)
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-

Prayer. We all know it's critical! The question is: Are we talking AT God or talking WITH God?

The Word and God and prayer go hand in hand, because it takes both the study of Scripture and Prayer to commune with the Lord. Evangelist Billy Sunday used to say that three principles should mark the Christian's life: **#1 Talk to God: that's pray, #2 Let God talk to you: Read Scripture #3 Go talk to others about Jesus.**

But, what does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit? It means we pray consistent with the will of the Holy Spirit. It means to pray according to His leading and in harmony with His will, and we need help from the Holy Spirit to do that.

Romans 8:26-28

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Listen, when we're praying, the Spirit of God joins us in that praying. It's not just you! You see, we need help when we pray and the Lord knew we would! The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God and so, He helps to direct our minds...our desires... and our requests.

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The love of God is the air we breathe in the gym. It's the glue that holds the Christian life together. And it's the love of God that keeps our Bible reading and prayer from becoming rote and routine. Sometimes, I have to just stop my praying and Bible and just sing to the Lord. We sing when we love...

You see, it takes a conscious effort to stay in the realm of God's love, because the world is always drawing us away to ourselves and to sin. So, how do we KEEP ourselves there? We obey...

1 John 2:5

⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him.

John 15:10-11

¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Keep yourself in the love of God. Listen, never forget...God's love is **holy love**, meaning that when we love Him, **we will obey Him**. So, when we "keep ourselves in the love of God," this means we are living in the realm of obedience. If you are not living in the realm of obedience, you are honestly not being truthful in how much you love Him.

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We are living with an eye on the prize. What is that? Money, a promotion, retirement, a car or trip? No, it's heaven. As Warren Wiersbe calls it, "it's an earnest expecting..." He says we're to live this life motivated more by the life to come than anything in this life.

Do you look forward to heaven? The truth is, many don't. Why? Because this world has all their attention...at that could become an idol in your life. No, I'm not saying you should want to die tonight and go to heaven...but, you'd be okay with it if you did. You wouldn't begrudge God and say, "I wanted to do this, or that..." When we say those things...we're really very shortsighted on what heaven really is... Remember...the greatest joy of heaven is knowing we'll be in the presence of Jesus.

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

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These are the people who are wavering. These people appear to be saved, but they're not grounded in the faith. Our job is to have mercy on them and help them, not push them down and disparage them. Of course, Satan wants us to have an immediate response of condemnation on any Christian who stumbles. It's easy to quickly point the finger. Yet, we shouldn't be an army that shoots our wounded, but instead, picks them up.

These people have wandered away from the camp into Enemy fire. We are to show compassion, like Jesus did for us...after all, Romans 5:8. After all, hasn't there been a time in your life when you strayed...when you were stubborn...when you acted with immaturity? Sure.

Look, I can fall, so can you! When you think you can't fall, you're getting READY TO. Be careful.

And something else...It's not beating them over the head with all that they've done wrong that's going to draw them back, it's the warmth of our compassion and love...showing mercy to them by saying, "Hey, I know you've done wrong and you do too...but, I'm not here to beat you up...I'm here to help you up...come on."

The last two go together...

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There are those in our lives who have totally left for the Enemy's camp. Maybe they haven't made it there yet, but they've almost crossed over... We've got to snatch them out of the flames! Just like the Angel of the Lord led Lot out of Sodom and shouted... "Don't look back!" Yes, we're to **show mercy with fear by hating sin**.

The term "fear" means "caution, or healthy respect," like how we are to treat a loaded gun or a sharp knife. We're careful. Meaning...we're to be careful when we try to go and rescue somebody...



Anyone who has ever been a lifeguard will tell you that you don't jump in after someone who's in deep trouble flailing in the water...because they'll likely drown you. You throw something else like a rope with a ring on it.

You see, when someone has been captured by the Enemy, you don't just walk up to them and say, "Hey...I'm here to take you back"...because they could capture you.

You see, I don't know how many people have said to me through the years... "I thought I could change him/her, but they just dragged me down with them."

We've got to hate **even the garment stained with sin**. This sounds strange to us...but not to the first century hearers...it's the example of what a priest in the OT would do to a garment that he thought was potentially infected with leprosy. Do you know what he'd do? He'd burn it! That's how bad we're to hate the sin!

Jude 1:23

²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Church family, in seeking to help people, we must be careful...we can't join in their mess and expect to rescue them. You don't go into a bar and start drinking with someone trying to bring them back to Jesus. That's ludicrous! Just because you are a strong believer doesn't mean that you are beyond satanic influence. You can become defiled by the very one you are trying to help. Again...we are to hate sin...yes, and love the sinner, but we must talk about hating the sin!

The sad truth is...there aren't a whole lot of Christians out there today who are strong enough (by way of Bible knowledge and prayer and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit) to help too many people. The Army of Christ is getting smaller and smaller. Those who are capable of actually being "boots on the ground" are becoming less and less...instead most are back in the chow-tent watching TV and being entertained to death.

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We come to the Doxology... And guess what Jude ends with? Salvation

Jude 1:24-25

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, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

At the end of it all...Jude speaks of salvation...the very thing he wanted to talk about. At the end of the race is Jesus...



Oh the joy of knowing Jesus!