Conviction in Compromise — Delivery Transcript

Jude 1:1–2 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, June 29, 2025 · *The Contender*

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To the book of Jude. We're going to be in Jude chapter one. There's only one chapter in the book of Jude, in case you didn't know that. It's one of the shortest and surprisingly also one of the most overlooked. Books in the New Testament. It was actually a letter written by Jude, brother of James, actually a half-brother of Jesus. And I think one of the reasons it gets overlooked a lot is because it is full of some crazy, crazy stuff. You got like angels arguing over Moses' body or arguing with the devil over over Moses' body.

You've got angels kept in prison. You've got quotations of books that are not in the Bible like first Maccabees and the testament of Moses and all kinds of fun stuff. And I've always kind of been interested in the book of Jude, but never been bold enough to preach it on a Sunday morning because of all the crazy stuff that's in there but I thought, you know, summer nobody really comes to church, so maybe that'd be a good time to do it. And then I show up this morning and I'll be dang it, there's not a lot of people here.

So it's maybe not the wisest decision I say that half jokingly. I it is true that a lot of people hit and miss in the summer, myself included. But the reason we're doing the book of Jude is not because there's less people here, it's because a lot of the issues that the audience that the book of Jude was written to, those issues are very similar, I think, to the issues that we're facing today. And I think it would be wise for us to look at how Jude wrote to them to handle those issues so that we can look at our own context and think about how we ought to how to address the issues that we face today because we live in a world of growing chaos and compromise.

Can we agree on that? There's a lot of moral compromise. There's a lot of certainly a lot of spiritual compromise. It's just things are different today. And it's a world very similar to the world that Jude wrote his letter. To the audience that received the letter of Jude. And I want you to imagine, I want you to put yourself in the shoes of a first century Jewish man or woman who had converted to Christianity, living in a Roman world marked by chaos,

persecution. Spiritual compromise both between your Jewish brothers and sisters and even starting to see that in the in the Christian church and certainly you're seeing that in Rome.

And I want you to imagine Jesus was you had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. As a Jewish person, that's a big deal. You believe that he was God's anointed king, prophesied about in the Old Testament, who was going to come and liberate God's people from their oppression and establish the kingdom of God. You were persuaded by his message, you were persuaded by his life, death, and resurrection. It had turned the world upside down. You were one of among thousands and thousands of other people who were believing the same thing thing and that Messiah who you believe was going to inaugurate the kingdom of God had ascended to heaven and on his way up to heaven he told his apostles I want you guys to preach the gospel.

I want you to spread this message to the ends of the earth. And until I come back, that's your job. And that's what they did. And the Holy Spirit blessed it. Imagine you begin to hear of the gospel fire spreading throughout Greece. East Asia and Judea and Jerusalem and all around the world, but the Lord hadn't come back yet. And Jesus You still believed he was the Messiah, and you were very thankful that the gospel fires were spreading throughout all the world, but the gospel fire in your own heart was starting to wane.

And those convictions that you were rock solid on all of a sudden were beginning to get a little bit weaker. The apostles were getting older. Some of your friends were being persecuted. Some of your friends had even died because of their faith in Jesus. One of them, of course, Stephen, Acts chapter 6, Acts chapter 7. Then it James the brother no I'm sorry John the brother of James after that and then after that no James the brother of John and then another James the brother of Jesus he was martyred, and that's just scratching the surface.

Eventually all twelve apostles were going to be martyred and you're beginning to wonder what in the world is going on? When is Jesus going to return? And in that kind of a climate, in a world of growing chaos and compromise, the thing that is needed for the Christian heart more than anything else is conviction. To be reminded of certain truths and to hold them fast as though they are certain and sure. And that is really the world in which Jude wrote his letter, and that is the purpose behind what he wrote.

It's a short letter, very direct, very confrontational. And it is written to a group of Christians who were former Jews living in that kind of a climate. Not only was there political uncertainty, Nero was sitting on the throne of Rome, he was erratic and ruthless. He his favorite people to blame were the Christians, and that's why Christians were getting persecuted. But you also had in that context a group of people in the church who were claiming to be Christians, but were teaching and preaching a gospel that was different than the gospel Jesus originally preached.

In fact, there was a group of political revolutionaries, not Christians, but they were called the zealots. They were Jewish political revolutionaries. And some of them had converted to Christianity and they were preaching a message that sounded much different than the message that Jesus taught and preached. Essentially, it was a theological song that they were singing. They were saying, we've got to overthrow Rome so that the Messiah can come. And they never really had much influence, but now because of the increased persecution, not only were they gaining influence in the Jewish community, people in the Christian church who used to dismiss them were now starting to entertain those thoughts.

Some who you never would have imagined are starting to join the course. They use words like grace, they use words like gospel, they say Jesus is Lord, and yet they twist the grace of God to be a license for sin and immorality. They talk about the kingdom of God as an excuse for political violence. You think to yourself, this doesn't seem right, this doesn't feel right, what are you to do? And in that kind of a context, a context I think that is increasingly becoming similar to ours today Jude says it's not just that you need conviction.

Having established your convictions, you need to contend for the faith. Contend for the faith that was once and all delivered to the saints. And we live in a context, a cultural climate. Where chaos and compromise is on the rise. There are so-called Christians that are teaching and preaching a gospel, a version of the gospel that is at odds or in conflict with the original message that Jesus preached. And in that context, we need conviction and we need to contend for the faith that was once in all delivered for the saints.

So that's why we're doing this book. That's why we're looking at this letter. And I think what Jude s tells these Christians is actually going to be really helpful for us today. So with that said, let's read the first Four verses, Jude chapter one, starting in verse one, Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who are the called, loved by God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ. May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all.

For some people who were designated for this judgment long ago have come in by stealth. They are ungodly, turning the grace of our God into sensuality and denying Jesus Christ. Our only master and Lord. So you get a little bit of insight just right there on what these Christians were facing. Commentators debate who the those people are. It's one of our favorite things to say. You know those people. Those people. Those people. Who are those people? We don't really know. Some some people say they were like Gnostics who believed that the body didn't matter and it was all spiritual and about secret knowledge.

Some say it was the zealots or a kind of semi-zealot slash Christian zealotry that was seeking to overthrow Rome. We don't know exactly. It kind of depends on when you date the letter. I put this letter a couple of years before the Jewish Roman revolt. Whoever they were,

somewhat irrelevant. What they were doing is very clear. They were naming the name of Jesus. They had snuck into the church, which means that they looked and talked, sounded like Christian believers, and yet they were advocating non Christian ideas, namely, Jesus is not master, Jesus is not Lord, Grace is a license for sin.

We can justify our immorality, and we can justify our rebellion and disobedience against authority, especially Roman authority. And Jude was saying, these people are not who they say they are. They are not what they claim to be. They are designated for judgment, and you need to contend for the faith in light of their in light of their abuses. And so he does that by saying a lot of things. He's going to he's going to he's going to address their false teaching. But what I want us to focus on this morning, if we want to be a contender in our culture of chaos and compromise.

There are certain things Jude does at the beginning of his letter that are helpful for us in that he reminds them of certain truths about who they are. In the Lord Jesus. And I think that's really important for us today to be reminded of certain core truths about our identity in Christ and about what Jesus calls us to be in a culture of chaos and compromise. And I think that's one of the reasons that when Jesus ascended to heaven, he didn't do so without first leaving us some things to remember him by.

The most common of course are like we did today, baptism. Every time someone is baptized, what do we do? We don't learn new knowledge about the kingdom of God. We get reminded of old knowledge. That Jesus died for our sins and according to the scripture, he was raised from the dead and according to the scriptures, and we died to our sin and were raised to new life. Every time we take the Lord's Supper, what do we do? He says, when you eat this bread, do this in what? Remembrance of me.

When you drink the cup, do this in remembrance of me. Why? Because Jesus knows what you need more than anything is not just getting new knowledge, new knowledge all the time. It's that you need to be reminded of old knowledge that you forget. I don't know about you, but it's easy to forget some of the core essential truths of the Christian faith, especially when things are getting difficult, persecution is on the rise. And you're under pressure to respond. There are things you need to remember if you want to be a true contender, and the things that he reminds them of are some important truths about who they are in the Lord, why they are who they are, and what God has promised.

And that's what we're going to look at today. First he says he introduces himself. He says my name is Jude. Slave or bondservant of Jesus the Christ, who is the Christ, and brother of James. Now that's pretty interesting. When we hear the word s slave or servant or bondservant, I don't know what comes to your mind. What comes to my mind when I hear the word slave is the horrific stain of chattel slavery in our American history, which is which is a grievous stain on our history. And it's easy to read that into the New Testament word

slave, but that's not what the New Testament meant by the word slave it's not that it was a good thing.

Slavery in the New Testament was not a good thing, but it was not the same thing as what we think of. And I think that's important. I've tried to say often that words get their meaning from the context, not the dictionary. And so when you're reading the New Testament you want to let the words be defined by their context. And in the New Testament the word slave, it's the Greek word doulos, it referred to a defeated bird in a cockfight. Have you ever seen chickens fight? Or I don't think chickens do fight.

I take that back. I've got some new chickens and they were fighting like crazy, getting their pecking order, but usually. They don't fight like that. They the roosters though, a cockfight, it gets pretty nasty, pretty ugly. And the defeated bird in a cockfight, that's the a doulos in the in the in the Greek New Testament. It came to not mean a defeated bird in a cockfight, but a person who is attached to a master? It conveyed the idea of loyalty, allegiance, submission of your will to their will, and that's what Jude is saying I am in relationship to Jesus.

He is my master. He is my Lord. He is the one to whom I give my utmost allegiance and fidelity. And that's, I think, a good picture of what Christian faith really is. It's remembering your chains. In some ways Jesus died to set you free from your chains. You're freed from the chains of sin and slavery to sin. You're free from the penalty of sin. And in to some degree you're free from the presence of sin in your life, insofar as you recover God's design. But in another way, when you become a Christian, you become a slave to Christ.

You become a servant to his kingdom. You also become a servant to other people. That's why Jesus said, if you want to be great in my kingdom, let the one who wants to be greatest be the servant of all. Those who want to be great among you should be servant. And this would have been difficult, I think, for any person to say. It would have been especially difficult for Jude to say, not only that he's a slave of Christ, but that He is a slave of Christ even though he is a brother of James.

Now we read that and we go, well, who's James, you know, what's the big deal? Well, James, it's not just any James, it's James, the brother of Jesus, who is the leader of the Jerusalem church. In fact, James was martyred by and I can't remember the guy's name. He was killed by one of the high priests, Ananus. Ananus? Ananis. Sounds like a word I probably shouldn't say from the stage, but you get the idea. And probably upon his martyrdom, Jude became the leader of the Jerusalem church. Many people believe this Jude is the Jude who is the brother of James, who is the brother of Jesus, which means Jesus was his half-brother.

You can look at Matthew 13, Mark chapter 6. If you're a Roman Catholic, you believe he was like a nephew or something else. But if you read it just in this context, it looks like this is the brother of Jesus. And if you were the brother of Jesus Pre-resurrection, when he was walking

around, people claiming that he was the Messiah and he was doing miracles and upsetting the apple cart, I'm sure it would have been tempting for you to say Jesus is not really my brother. Cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. We've kind of disowned him from the family.

He's causing all kinds of chaos. And to distance yourself from Jesus. And I don't know if he did or didn't do that. But I know after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to James, and James bowed the knee. Even though you're my brother, I see you as the Christ. You are the king of the Jews. You are God's anointed. And Jude is now saying that same thing even though Jesus was his half-brother. It would have been very easy for Jude to say, yeah, I'm the brother of Jesus. What's up? I'm the brother of the resurrected Lord.

Of course I should be the leader in Jerusalem, but he does not use his proximity to power. To his advantage, like any one of us would probably do in this world, because he remembers the words of Jesus, those who would be great among you must be your servant. And his identity is first and foremost not his earthly status, not his genealogy, not his biology. It is his theology that in relationship to Jesus, even though he's my brother, I am his slave. I'm a servant. That's what it means to remember your chains.

Never forget, it doesn't matter if you're the president of the United States. If you are in Christ, you are a servant of Christ. He's the king. It doesn't matter if you're a person of high position or low position in the kingdom of God, we are all bondservants of Jesus. And I kind of wish we could bring some of this language back, this idea of faith being allegiance, not just intellectually agreeing with certain facts. I think that's what a lot of people mean by faith. And even myself I've used this word faith to convey this idea that You have faith in Jesus when you believe that he died on the cross for your sins, that God raised him from the dead, and that he is the only one who can forgive you of sin and bring you to heaven when you die.

It's easy for people when they think of faith in those terms to think about salvation as I accept Jesus into my heart. And I've heard that language used a lot. I've even used that language. You accept Jesus into your heart. Almost like Jesus is a Christmas gift. And you receive him and it's like, wow, this is the best Christmas ever. But is that I don't think is how the New Testament uses the word faith. It's the Greek word pistis. I think it uses it much more in terms of how Jude is using the word slave or servant.

If you go back in the New Testament, look, every time the word faith is used, often it's used in a context of allegiance, submission. Reliance upon loyalty to fidelity to faithfulness to the object of your faith and that I think is a Christian Vision of what saving faith is. It's not just I think Jesus is Lord or I agree I need grace, but giving yourself over to Jesus as Savior and Lord. He is my master. And I wonder sometimes if the reason we're so ineffective at contending for the faith today is because we've lost that truth.

If some of the reasons we've become so tolerant of immorality and false doctrine and all kinds of nonsense in the church is because we have adopted a vision of discipleship that has removed allegiance to Jesus as sovereign king. Because he is. And that's what Judas is saying. He is the king. And so true faith shows allegiance to Christ as sovereign king. And that's the reason why people don't become Christians. The reason people don't become Christians today has less to do with the intellectual doubts about the historical reliability of the resurrection or the philosophical evidences for God.

I think you can make a strong case for that. I think the reason a lot of people don't become believers is because they don't want to bow the knee to Jesus as Lord. I don't want to show him my allegiance. I may agree with his theology. I may agree with some of his teachings. But I am my own man, I am my own woman, I do my own thing, I go my own way, and Judas saying, you'll never get into the kingdom with that with that kind of mindset. Faith is submitting to Jesus as king So he reminds them of who he is, and by virtue of who he is, who they are, we are all servants of Jesus Christ.

We need to show allegiance to Christ as king. And then he reminds them of who they are or why they are. In verse the second half of verse one, he says, to those who are the called, loved by God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ. This is interesting in the original language. I probably talk about this too much, but it's just so interesting. You see this little article, the word be, it's called a definite article, and the word called. Those are actually separated in the original Greek. Like a theology sandwich, and these phrases loved by God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ are put in the middle.

So it literally, literally reads to those who are the loved by God the Father, kept for Jesus Christ called. So why does he do that because it makes no sense in English. But you can do that in Greek. You can make no sense in English. It's so fun to translate. I hate it. But the reason that they're doing that is to emphasize the main point, which is the calling. Don't forget you're a you're a don't forget your chains and don't forget your calling. What does it mean to be called? We use the word called all the time today.

It's I think when we use the word call, we think of it as a strong emotion or a strong desire to do something. And I don't think that's a bad, wrong usage of the word called. I use it that way too. I feel called to preach. I feel called to be the past I feel called to be a pastor. Some people feel called to teach. It's a strong feeling to do a certain thing, but that's not always how the New Testament uses this word calling. And especially if you were a Jewish man or woman, when you heard the word calling.

You weren't thinking strong desire to do something. You were thinking election, God's choice, being chosen for a particular task. So we could say that we called governor Abbott to be our governor and that we chose him to do that role. And maybe you didn't choose him, but democratically we chose him, or any kind of political leader. And for the Jews, this would

have brought into their mind the calling of Abraham in Genesis chapter 12. Father Abraham had many sons. He was the father of Israel, and that God chose him among all the people in the world.

To advance his covenant. And through Abraham came Isaac, through Isaac came Jacob, through Jacob came Judah and the tribes of Israel. And that's what they meant by calling. God chooses us. He's sovereign. He didn't choose us because we were good. He didn't choose us because we were wise or great or strong. He chose us because he chose us. Because that's what God does. He gets to decide he's sovereign. But because he has chosen us, that means we have a purpose. That means that we have God has a plan for us, that we are a steward of being faithful to that plan.

And what Jude is doing, he's applying that not just to the Jews, just like Paul and James, he's saying, we are all called in that we are chosen, we are God's elect in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's calling on Abraham. He said, through you I'm going to bless the nations. Through your offspring, I'm going to bless the nations. Jesus is that offspring. He is the one who crushes the head of the serpent. He reverses the curse. He's the Messiah. He's the heir of David. He is the chosen.

And when you repent of your sins and you put your faith in Jesus, you become chosen in Christ. You become part of that elect and Jude is saying, don't you ever forget that God has chosen you. And that's a big, big, big, big big idea. So he narrows it down. Don't forget your calling. What will what about my calling do I not forget? Don't forget you are loved by God the Father. And you are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ. Two things which are so easy to forget in a world of growing chaos and compromise.

I think king James version says you are sanctified by God the Father. That's a manuscript conflict. So some newer translations say loved and some say sanctified. It's a very close spelling in the in the Greek, that's why they dis disagree. I think it means loved. It's the word agape. It's a it's a unique word for love. It means you are loved even though you may not deserve it. You are loved irregardless of the character of the beloved. God's love is a servant of the will, not a victim of the emotion.

God's love is eternal, it is covenantal, it is forever and ever and ever. I think that's why he uses the phrase. The father. It's like a father's love. A father can love his son even when he blows it, even when he messes up, at least a good father would. Even though you are inferior to me, even though you came from my loins, even though I'll always be over you I will never be over you in a way that seeks your harm. I will always be over you in a way that seeks your welfare, seeks your good.

That is a good Father's love. And he's saying that's who you are in Jesus. You are loved by God. And it's also the way it's the tense of it is this idea of it's something that God revealed in

the past and it has continuing abiding effects. God has showed his love for us in this that he sent his one and only Son. To pay the penalty for our sins. God has loved you in that He sent His Son to pay the price for your sin in violation of God's design. And if you would repent of your sin and believe in Jesus Christ, you will be credited with his righteousness.

You will be given eternal life. You will be forgiven of sin, past, present, and future. You will have a new ability to recover God's design and live life to the full, this fuller life in Jesus that God so desperately desires you to experience, you can now have in Jesus because of God's great love for you. You are chosen. And don't ever forget God has chosen you. He has called you to salvation. And those of you who have responded to God's call, you should never get over that story. Never forget God's amazing love for you.

And not only did he show you his love at the cross of Jesus Christ, he's also reminding them he is keeping you. It's a word that was used of prison guards. It's not this idea that God is keeping you from danger or keeping you from harm. We all know that's not true. We can still get diseases, we can still get sick, we can still have death, we can still suffer loss. But God is keeping you the word is this idea of keeping something for an appointed time, like a prison guard keeps a prisoner until the release date.

That's what God is doing for us until Jesus Comes again. That's the appointed time. He's keeping us for the second coming when Jesus comes, establishes his kingdom, and he's essentially saying, because God has called you, he will finish what he started He will not let you shipwreck in faith. He will not let you fall away. He will maintain, strengthen, encourage you until the very end, so that when Jesus comes and establishes his kingdom, you will be with him. And part of that deliverance. This is especially good news if you are in a culture of rebellion against the Roman government by a bunch of Jewish zealots who are saying, you got to join our party if you want to be part of the solution.

If you want Messiah to come, you better get your sword and go with us. And he's saying, no, that's not God's purpose for your life. It's not violence. It's not. It's not worldly politics. It's not anything of this world. It is the kingdom that Jesus preached, a kingdom of repentance and faith and receiving God's love for you through the person and work of Jesus. Don't ever forget your calling. You are loved by God and you are kept by God. And find assurance in God's sovereign choice. See, that's the difference between Christians and everyone else in this world.

We all suffer the same brokenness, we all see the same problems, but Christians are able to find joy and peace and a comfort because God is on the throne. He's he's got the whole world in his hands and I don't know what he's doing. But I know he's good. I know he's got me, and he's been faithful then, he's going to be faithful now. And when you remember that, you'll be ready to contend. Those are the convictions you need to remember. I'm a slave of Jesus. I'm

chosen in Jesus. I remember my chains, and I remember God's calling, and then he finally ends it.

Remember God's compassion. He makes this prayer, may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. A simple prayer. In some ways it's not a prayer, this is a greeting. All letters in the ancient world had greetings. We still do this today. Have you ever wrote an email? In your email you say, hey John, hope you're doing well. Hey John, hope life is treating you good. But the New Testament was different in that it packed a lot of theology into their greetings. And most greetings in the New Testament letters from Romans on down the content of the greeting really is a framework for the substance of the letter, which is really Quite a paradox if you think about the purpose of Jude's writing.

He's riding to give these Christians conviction so they can contend for the faith. He's saying, I want you to fight these fools who are shipwrecking this local church. Well, how are we going to fight them, Jude? By praying to God for mercy, peace, and love. Not power, not force, not swords, not money. You need God to lavish on you, multiply among you mercy, peace, and love. Which at best is a paradox, right? How can you fight somebody with mercy, peace, and love? And yet that's exactly what he does. And he does it again if you look at verse 21 He uses the same three words, have mercy on the perishing, love the wavering, and actually I can't remember what it says, but it says mercy, peace, and love.

Look it up. Ted Cruz said, get on to Google and look it up. Mercy, peace, and love are the thing we need the most because those capture God's compassion for people. And when the world is going crazy, the first thing to go usually in our hearts is the compassion of Jesus. When people are acting crazy, you don't feel very loving towards them. When people have sinned against you and they are persecuting you, when they have slandered you, the thing that is first. And foremost in your mind is not peace. It's war.

And that's how the kingdoms of this world work. And Judas saying Jesus is preaching a different kingdom. And he's saying this is important not just because it's a good Christian virtue or because that's how Jesus lived. He's saying these are the things you must fight for because these are intrinsic to the gospel message we are defending. You can't defend the Christian gospel with power and money and violence. Because that's not the essence of the Christian gospel. Jesus died to make peace. He makes peace by the blood of his cross. Jesus died because of God's great love for us.

God so loved the world. That he gave his one and only son. No greater love has anyone than this, than that he laid down his life for his friends. The love of God, the peace of God, the mercy of God is intrinsic. It is essential to the gospel that we are preaching, and when we use tools of this world to defend that biblical gospel, then we do not contend. We corrupt, we destroy what we are fighting to preserve. And so he's saying, don't you forget God's compassion for people. He loved you and he loves Nero.

He loves the people who are putting you to the sword and burning you at the stake. Even Jesus on the cross, Father forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. And when Christians can hold fast to those things, they are positioned well to contend for the faith. Remember God's compassion. True faith appeals to God's sovereign care. This really came home for me A couple weeks ago in our church family, there's there's been a lot of death in our church family. Horrific, terrible, tragic death. And talking to one particular family about their loss, they kind of took me off guard and that they were thanking God for his mercy.

That the person went quickly. This is a person they loved very deeply, a person they wanted to spend more and more time with, but the person had a stroke and a brain bleed and essentially died in 24 hours. And they said God was merciful to not drag out slow, prolonged suffering and death. And I thought, huh, that's kind of interesting. Another family in our church there, someone they love very much has dementia. This is actually true of a lot of people in our church, but it came home for me because this person has poured themselves out in service, denied income, denied work, denied opportunity, denied all sorts of things because they're taking care of this of their parent.

And I've talked to that person a lot about what they've lost and it's been very difficult. But the other day they were just encouraged and reminded of how God has been so good to them to give them the time. To be with that individual, even though they don't have the memory they used to have, and even though there are really bad days that are excruciatingly difficult. There are some good days that are just precious memories and a ministry from the Holy Spirit and a precious gift of God's mercy and God's love.

And they were saying, I'm thankful for that now those are two examples you could point to hundreds in our own church where people have walked through incredible hardship and difficulty. And maybe not on day one, maybe not on day ten, but at some points in the journey, God in his grace multiplies mercy, peace, and love. So when the worldly response or a typical response might be anger or violence or any number of things, they respond with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. With the compassion of Jesus Christ. They respond in seeking peace and not war.

They respond in showing love and not indifference or hate. And that is how Christians contend for the faith. You see, we fight differently than the world fights. The weapons of our warfare are not of this world. They take thoughts captive and make them obedient to Jesus Christ. May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. About a generation after Jude wrote his letter, there was things went from bad to worse. The zealots finally mounted a war against the Roman Empire. It was called the Jewish Roman war. So creative. The Jews lost.

They were crushed like that. And the persecution and hostility of Rome only intensified after that. After Nero, you thought Nero was bad, it just got worse after him. Politicians were more corrupt. They blamed the Jews and the Christians for all of the problems in their

world. And as a result of that, Christian persecution became blood sport. And they would drag them into the arenas and let them be eaten by lions and burned at the stake, and it was extremely difficult. In fact, Tertullian said it was the blood of the martyrs that became the seed of the church, and one of the martyrs of the faith is a guy by the name of polycarp.

I mention polycarp because he was a disciple of one of the original apostles. He was a disciple of John. He was 86 years old, beloved by his local church as a pastor. And he was dragged into the arena, hunched over, frail, not a threat to anybody. And they bound him to combustible materials and they said one word can save your life give give allegiance to Caesar and we'll spare you renounce the atheists, and you'll be free. They called Christians atheists because they didn't believe in the Roman pantheon of gods. And a polycarp looked up to heaven and he said, renounce the atheists, as if to say, I renounce your atheism.

I renounce the atheism of Rome. I am not renouncing my faith in Jesus. And they said, one word will set you free. And he said, 86 years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I now blaspheme my Savior and king? That is allegiance. That is not nostalgia, that is not sentimentality, that is true faith. And that is Tertullian, being a true contender, remembering that God is sovereign, that He is in control, even though I'm about to be burned. Remembering that my allegiance is not to Caesar or any earthly master, my allegiance is to Jesus, who is the Messiah.

He is the king. And he is coming again. And I will not allow any earthly power or any any worldly force to cause me to deny my allegiance to him. And he said, well, we're about to burn you. And he said, You threaten me with the fire that burns for a season and is easily quenched. But you are ignorant of the eternal fire that God has reserved for the ungodly. And with that they lit him up and he burned at the stake, and some people say, by some people I mean Josephus, Jewish historian, said.

In that moment, it didn't look like his body burned like all the other bodies, but that, in fact, it glowed. And through the bold testimony of a guy like Tur a guy like polycarp, the gospel increasingly spread throughout the Roman Empire such that even their harshest persecution couldn't put out the flame, and it turned the world upside down so that finally Constantine legalized it for his political advantage. That's how Christians fight. That's how we contend for the faith. We cannot keep ourselves from experiencing confrontation. We live in a culture of growing secularism and compromise, theological and moral.

But the way that we contend, the way the gospel advances to the ends of the earth is not by us fighting, but by us standing. Firm, unwavering, in the conviction that Jesus is Lord, our God is sovereign, he has chosen us for a purpose. And the kingdom advances through love and not force. It advances through faith and not violence. And if we could recapture that vision for contending for our faith today. I think what we saw the early church do in the first century, we can see the Lord do again in our day and age.

And so that's what I want us that's what I want to leave us with this morning as we enter into this time of response. I don't know what this looks like for you individually there's a lot of thoughts I have personally, but I just want you right there where you're seated to enter into a time of prayer. Maybe this morning you're not a Christian because you've never really given Jesus your allegiance. You prayed a prayer when you were a kid, maybe you got baptized, but Jesus never became Lord of your life.

And this morning he's saying, if you want heaven, if you want eternal life, it's not about what you say, it's about what you do not your works, but demonstrating true faith by bowing the knee to Jesus as key. And I make no apologies. I'm not trying to scare you into heaven. Salvation is by grace through faith, but that faith gives allegiance to Jesus as king. So if you've never responded to Jesus in that way, I would invite you this morning to do that. Right there where you're seated, you can fill out that connection.

Corner you can come down here to the front as a public testimony that I'm giving my life to Jesus. I'm surrendering to him as Savior and king. Others of you I know are facing conflict, suffering, discouragement. This morning maybe the Holy Spirit is just reminding you of God's love, of God's plan, that He has a purpose, that He is not surprised by anything. He is with you through everything. And that he's calling you to respond differently than maybe what your heart is inclined to do. So would you just pray now, would you multiply, Father, would you multiply mercy and peace and love?

And my heart, so that your kingdom can come on earth as it is in heaven. And I can hasten the day when Christ will return and usher in the fullness of the kingdom of God. The altar's open if you want to pray, but let's respond to the Lord now. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this word.