

Jude: Defend the Faith

A Worthy Fight

Jude 3-4

April 30, 2023

HDBC

What do Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Dartmouth, and Princeton have in common? They were established as Christian institutions to train ministers for the gospel. **Harvard** was founded *to lead students to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life and knowledge.*

Princeton founder: *Cursed be all learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ.*

An early ad for Columbia, *the chief thing that is aimed at in the college is to teach and train children to know God and Jesus Christ.*

Today each of these is a bastion of secular humanism where Christianity is ridiculed, scorned, & attacked. They failed to recognize the insidious attack of a determined enemy and did not fight well-enough to win the day. It was a battle worth fighting, but they did not. Every church, every denomination, every Christian school & organization is a target and must remain vigilant.

There is a war being waged against God and His people. It started in the Garden of Eden with the deceptive words of the serpent and continues today. He plays by no rules and yields to no sense of fairness. He is ruthless, persuasive, and persistent, His primary strategy is not a frontal assault but deception. He creeps in and destroys from within. His most powerful and effective weapon is distortion of the truth. That weapon, when placed into the hands of a compelling teacher, can destroy the faith of unsuspecting people. That is what he hopes for.

It was happening in Jude's day. False teachers were spouting distortions of the true gospel and right doctrine. They were leading people to reject the very truth that could save their eternal souls. Jude could not sit idly by and let it happen. He was called to speak, to act, to engage in this war, to fight this worthy fight. We are called to do the same in our day.

Read Jude 1:3-4

Four key things to note in the text.

1. The Intention (3a)

Jude reveals that his original purpose for writing the letter was changed. He intended to write about our **common salvation**. In other words, Jude intended to write about **the blessings of salvation**. He uses the word **common** not in the sense of bland or ordinary but of something which was the same for them all. The experience of salvation is the same for all those who are truly saved. We all come by grace through faith.

Maybe he wanted to dive into the **depth of the grace** found in salvation.

Maybe he wanted to clarify the **theological nuances** of salvation.

Maybe he wanted to focus on the **kind of faith** that leads to salvation.

Maybe he wanted to focus on the **providence of God** in salvation.

We don't know what he was going to write because **a greater priority** emerged. The very salvation he wanted to write about was under attack.

2. The Necessity (3b)

There was a battle that Jude and his readers needed to join. With quill in hand, he was moved by the Holy Spirit to call his readers to war.

The word speaks of being **compelled, impressed, even pressured**. It speaks of an internal pressure. In John 4:4 the Bible says Jesus **had to go through Samaria**. He was compelled to go that way. Same word.

Jude suddenly became a military recruiter. This was not a fight to take territory or to conquer armies. It was a fight to defend the **doctrinal purity** of the gospel and of the Christian faith. The fight is not against other people but against distortions of the truth that mar the pure gospel message.

Swindoll describes Jude's change of mind like this. **A massive threat appeared in Jude's path that caused him to slam on the brakes, shift into low gear, and abruptly turn down a darker path through a more urgent subject.**

3. The Fight (3c)

Two things to note about this fight.

1) The Effort Required

Contend Earnestly. This is the only place in the NT this word is found. It is

an intensification of a more common word. It describes the **effort of an athlete** competing to win. Our word **agonize** comes from this word.

This intensified form underscores and highlights the importance of this conflict and the need for spiritual strength. Those who fight this fight will get tired. The second thing to note is . . .

2) The Truth Defended

The faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. This is not a reference to personal faith that leads to salvation. The phrase describes something different. Note the definite article, ***the*** faith. This refers to the whole body of revealed truth from God. The Bible!

Delivered to the saints. This is not something that some person manufactured. It is not fabricated or worked up by a collection of individuals. It is one body of truth that was delivered by God through individuals chosen by Him.

Once for all. That means, once it was completed, that is all that is needed. There are no additions to this book. It is complete.

This book, this truth is under great attack. We are called to defend it, not in the sense that it is in jeopardy of being destroyed. It can and will stand. ***Spurgeon said it eloquently: The truth is like a lion. Whoever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose and it will defend itself.***

Our call is to speak against ***distortions*** of this truth. There are those who will twist its meaning, distort its truth and weaken its application. We must speak boldly against these things. Not talking about being wrong on minor points of doctrine. Talking about the central doctrines that have been taught from generation to generation through sermons, creeds, hymns, and confessions of faith. The primary, essential doctrines.

4. The Source (4)

Jude then points to the opposing army. They were not armed with physical weapons, but with spiritual weapons designed to kill the soul and lead people away from the true faith. Note how Jude describes them. Four things.

1) They were in the church

They were not terrorists who fought their way into the church but subversives who had slipped in, unnoticed. They are like spies. The word Jude uses implies a **sinister and secret infiltration**.

William Barclay describes it like this.

It was used of the plausible and seductive words of someone who pleads their case cleverly, seeping gradually into the minds of a judge and jury; it was used of an outlaw slipping secretly back into the country from which he has been expelled; It always indicates a stealthy insinuation of something evil into a society or situation.

They were members of the local church, but as we will quickly see, they were never a part of the true church. This was not an attack from the outside but from the inside. This is the most dangerous kind of enemy.

2) They were not saved

Though they were able to *sneak* into the church, they were noted by God long ago and marked for condemnation.

The word means, to write beforehand. NIV has it *whose condemnation was written about long ago*. The amplified translates this as *their doom was predicted long ago*. This comes as no surprise to God.

3) They were ungodly

They were nothing like God. They were lacking in a reverential awe of God and their actions revealed it.

4) They were false teachers

Teaching is a noble profession and important activity as long as the content is true and the application is appropriate. The activity of false teachers is neither noble nor good. They did two really bad things.

a. Distorted the doctrine of grace

They were turning the truth of God's grace into a license to sin. They were basically saying it did not matter what you did with your body as long as your spirit was right. They believed **the spirit and the body**

were separate entities and were not affected by one another. Not so.

When a person is truly saved by the grace of God, there is a new desire to resist temptation and reject sin. We still sin, but we only do so after a struggle with temptation. And when we sin, there is a conviction that leads to confession and repentance.

False teachers in Jude's day were saying *sin is no big deal* because it only affected the body and not the soul. This is blatantly false.

Others were distorting grace in another way. The greater our sin, the greater the grace we receive. The grace of God will always be enough to cover our sins. So, maybe we should sin more so we might receive more grace. Paul addressed it in Romans 6.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

A similar perspective is running rampant through the church today. David Helms wrote of this in his commentary on Jude:

You want a woman who is not your wife? Take her. Take her in bed. Take her on the screen. Take hundreds of them in an hour if you please. A man? Why not? He's yours? Money? Grab it. Grace covers it all, they claimed.

He goes on to write, *Daily, the temptation is to presume upon grace.* I can do this. God will show grace. Presumption upon grace may be one of our greatest sins. It was a horrifying thought to Paul and Jude that anyone would take God's free gift and turn it into a license to sin.

Imagine a convicted murderer who is pardoned by a governor. The pardon does not give him a license to murder again. If you steal from me and I forgive you, I'm not saying, steal some more.

b. Denied the divine nature of Christ

They were denying the deity and Lordship of Christ.

If Christ is taught to be anything **less than divine**, it is false.

If Christ is taught to be anything **less than Lord**, it is false.

If Christ is taught to be anything **less than absolutely sufficient** for your salvation, this teaching is false.

I've read dozens of books about our nation's wars. I love reading of heroism & patriotism found in those willing to fight for a just cause. Most recently ***The Mosquito Bowl***. It was about an unlikely football game played on the island of Guadalcanal prior to the bloody battle on Okinawa. It occurred on Christmas Eve, 1944. The game included 65 players, members of the 4th and 29th Marine regiments who squared off against each other in a game dubbed ***The Mosquito Bowl***.

Fifteen of the men would die in combat, most in the battle of Okinawa. Why a football game there and then? Those 65 men had been successful football players before the war. College all-Americans, and some even in the NFL. While on Guadalcanal they two regiments became to banter about which side was better in football. And so, they settled it in a game. The game ended in a 0-0 tie.

Why were these star football players on a battlefield 6000 miles from the U.S. Why were they not toting the ball up and down a field for the entertainment of thousands. A simple reason. **We were at war**. Our nation was attacked & these men took it seriously. They set aside their personal desires and pursuits to become engaged in a greater cause.

Defending the faith is for us, that greater cause, that **worthy fight**. We must not sit on the sidelines. We must know the truth, speak the truth, live the truth and defend the truth. We do this like Jesus, with love, compassion and grace. But also with courage, conviction and clarity. It must be done in our homes, our schools, our offices, our businesses. And most importantly in our churches.