

**Talk – Jude 17-25 – Contend for the Faith**

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**Bible Reading/s**

Zechariah 3 & Jude 1-4, 17-25

**Central Truth**

Contending for the Faith – under God, be in it to win it.

**Purpose**

In this sermon, I want to listener to learn from Jude how to contend for the faith they have in Jesus.

**Outline**

The Contender

The Little Letter of Jude

Urgency

Remember (vv. 17-19)

Scoffers today

1. \_\_\_\_\_ of Christianity
2. \_\_\_\_\_ of Christianity

Contending for the Faith

Build-up in the Holy Faith (v. 20)

Pray in the Holy Spirit (v.20)

Keep in God's Love (v.21)

Wait on the Lord Jesus (v. 21)

Show Mercy – towards others (vv. 22-23)

- a. the \_\_\_\_\_
- b. those who \_\_\_\_\_
- c. those who \_\_\_\_\_

Now unto him (vv. 24-25)

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CHECK TIME

### Talk

#### Prayer

*Dear Lord and Father,*

*You call, you love and you keep. And you do that abundantly by your mercy, peace and love.*

*Bring us to your word Father and help us to learn how to contend for your faith.*

*In Jesus Christ. Amen.*

#### The Contender

- Well I am a bit of a tennis tragic, which means that for a couple of weeks recently I was watching all things Wimbledon.
- And this year we were treated to the longest grand slam semi-final in history – between John Isner and Kevin Anderson – it took them 6 hours and 36 minutes over five sets. The final set they played 50 games – that is longer than most matches.  
(6 h 36 [Wimbledon](#) 2018, Semifinals:  [Kevin Anderson](#) def.  [John Isner](#), 7–6<sup>(8–6)</sup>, 6–7<sup>(5–7)</sup>, 6–7<sup>(9–11)</sup>, 6–4, 26–24)
- Two men contending for the most famous tennis title in history.
- John Isner, I think is quite a remarkable tennis player.
- Back in 2010, Isner played the longest tennis match in professional history against Nicolas Mahut also at Wimbledon – it went for (get this) 11 hours and 5 minutes, it covered 3 days and the final set ran for 138 games.  
(11 h 05 [Wimbledon](#) 2010, 1st Round:  [John Isner](#) def.  [Nicolas Mahut](#), 6–4, 3–6, 6–7<sup>(7–9)</sup>, 7–6<sup>(7–3)</sup>, 70–68 (3 days).)
- An absolute marathon.
- In matches like those ones, there are no losers, there is just one player who doesn't win.
- 'You have to be in it to win it' is the saying – well John Isner understands what that means – he is called the marathon man because he just doesn't give up.

#### The Little Letter of Jude

- We return this morning to the little letter of Jude.
- It is written to Christians – and the reason Jude writes is to encourage them to contend for the faith.
- Verse 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 entrusted to the saints.*'
- This verse sets the theme for the letter.

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- Those who share this faith should contend for the faith. Under God, they are in it to win it – or should be!

### **Urgency**

- You will notice that there is an urgency that goes with what Jude has written.
- He was *eager* to write, he felt he *had* to write, and he wrote to *urge* them to contend.
- Why? - verse 4 gives the answer.
- It is because there are certain men who have slipped in among them and are challenging the faith.
- Jude sees the fight, he understands the stakes, and urgently writes to firm up those Christians who are at risk of getting lost.
- And so, in the first half of the letter he describes the challenges to the faith (we looked at that last week) and in the second half of the letter he describes how to contend for the faith (and that is what we look at this week).
  
- Jude may have been written in the first century – yet it sounds like it could have been written for today.
- Friends, let's be contenders. Let's be in it to win it. And if that means a marathon, then so be it!

### **Remember (vv. 17-19)**

- Make sure you have Jude open in front of you.
- Verse 17, Jude says '*Dear Friends, remember*'.
- I wonder if they are told to remember because they are prone to forget! (That is like me!!)
  
- Remember, those who taught them the faith – the apostles of the Lord Jesus.
- They were the ones who were eyewitnesses, they were the ones who lived with Jesus, they weren't writing about history, they were the history – and what they taught equipped those who would follow to know with certainty the things about Jesus.
- And those apostles also said, verse 18, '*in the last times, there will be scoffers*'.
- They will scoff because they will want to put their own desires (as ungodly, or 'natural' as they may be) – they will want to put their own desires before that of the godly or spiritual.
- In other words, these are people who will put themselves before that which is true.
  
- Who are these men?

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Last week we looked at some of the characteristics of these men –

- Verse 8 – folk who reject authority.
- Verse 10 – those who speak abusively about that which they don't understand.
- Verses 12-13 - people from within the fellowship – and generally folk who put themselves before that of the gospel and the gospel fellowship to the detriment of those who share the faith.
- Verse 16 – grumblers, faultfinders, boasters about themselves.
- These people, put themselves in a class of their own, above others.
  - It is thought that this letter is written against some of the gnostic influences of the day.
  - Gnostics were those who claimed that they had a 'higher knowledge' of things – if that is true, then you can see Jude highlighting those who think they are smarter or more spiritual than others.

*PAUSE*

### **Scoffers today**

- Our world today seems to be increasingly hostile towards Christianity and Christians.
- The attacks, the pressures – they come from all sorts of directions. Often from folk who claim to know better – those perhaps with 'higher knowledge'.
- At the risk of over generalising there are two fronts that Christianity seems to be attacked.

1. One front attacks the **reasonableness of Christianity** - an attack on our minds.

- This is not new.
- These are the attempts to suggest that Christianity makes no sense - belief is foolishness, or it is baseless, that it cannot be proved to be right.
- Richard Dawkins and many science faculties at universities around the world can push this agenda – saying that hard facts cannot be proved, history doesn't matter, and evidence is inconclusive.

2. The second front attacks the **character of Christianity** – an attack on our emotions.

- This is more recent.
- These are the attempts to say that Christianity hurts you – belief is oppressive, it abuses people, it messes with your life.
- Many arts faculties at universities around the world can push this agenda.
- It is not helped by the way Hollywood presents religious figures as controlling, dishonest, and manipulative (it is hard to think of a positive example of a religious figure in Hollywood).

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- And of course, this is not helped every time a religious figure is rightly exposed for dishonestly or sexual misconduct – something which tends to be picked up quite quickly by our secular media.
  
- There are legitimate threats – and any Christian who is willing to contend for their faith will feel this pressure.
- Jude recognises this.
- In verse 19 he says that these scoffers will divide you.
- They will take some, convince others - they will divide.
- And when that influence comes into the church, then the result is a weaker fellowship.
- No church wants to be divided.
- Jude is writing, urgently because who knows that a church which is clear on what the apostles taught will be a church that is at less risk of being divided by folk with personal agendas.

*PAUSE*

### **Contending for the Faith**

- So how does the Christian contend for the faith in the face of this threat?
- Jude says, commit yourselves to four key values...

#### **Build-up in the Holy Faith (v. 20)**

- First, verse 20, build yourselves up in the **most holy faith**.
- A 'holy faith' means a set apart faith, a unique faith, an utterly different faith.
- How does one build themselves up in this holy faith? – by remembering what the apostles teaching is (17) – for that was what was entrusted (v3).
- Friends, you cannot be influenced and shaped by that which you do not know.
- And you cannot be equipped to stand firm unless you continue to be built up in God's word.

#### **Pray in the Holy Spirit (v.20)**

- Second, also verse 20, pray in the **Holy Spirit**.
- Those who have departed from God's ways will most likely also be folk who have departed from prayer.
- To pray in the Spirit is one of the privileges of the Christian life, you pray knowing that God's Spirit is with you and interceding for you.
- And bear in mind that God has promises to listen to the prayers of the faithful and he doesn't promise to listen to the prayers of those who are apostate.
- So Pray.

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You will note, that the first two things that are mentioned as disciplines for contending for the faith are – word and prayer.

### **Keep in God's Love (v.21)**

- Third, verse 21, keep in **God's** love.
- This letter is addressed to those who are 'kept by Jesus Christ'. It is Jesus who keeps the Christian in the love and call of God.
- Yet, the Christian is called to '*keep themselves in God's love*'.
- It recognises that the Christian brings something to the table when it comes to their relationship with God.
- Like a child before a Father, the relationship has its perimeters and it is abundantly clear who ultimately calls the shots (the Father), but the relationship is shared and strengthened when both parties turn towards one another – not when one part turns their back on the other.
- So, keep relating to your Lord God.

### **Wait on the Lord Jesus (v. 21)**

- Fourth, also verse 21, wait for the mercy of the **Lord Jesus**.
- This speaks of what it is to come.
- Walking the Christian life is not only *looking back* to what Jesus has done in dying on the cross – it is about *looking forward* and *waiting* faithfully to experience what Jesus did for us – what comes in eternal life.
- That is the hope of the Christian life – what is ahead is better than what is behind.
- And it is only by the mercy of Jesus that we might enjoy what he has done for us.

Now, I want you to notice something about those four key values: Faith, Prayer, Love, Hope – a Christian is not going to go far wrong if he or she sticks to those four key values – faith, prayer, love, hope.

- In many ways they are attitudes, personal convictions that help the Christian man or women to look *up* to God, *out* to others and *forward* to what is to come.
- In these verses we find what we need to know in order to contend.
- And the pattern for contending has been set by Father, Son and Spirit.

*PAUSE*

### **Show Mercy – towards others (vv. 22-23)**

- But, the activist among you says, 'Yes, Yes, what is it that we should be doing?'
- Jude answers that in verses 22 and 23. He says, show mercy.
- As you contend for the faith, then before you will be three different kinds of person.

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First there will be *the doubter* – verse 22.

- Have mercy on those who are wavering – be generous in attitude to those who have doubts in faith – so that you might hold them close. Listen to them, love them, chat things through in love, take them for a coffee or a long walk...)

Second there are *those who need to be snatched from the fire* – verse 23

- The imagery here is from Zechariah 3, where the stick is rescued from the fire just as the flames start to lick at it
- These are the people who are on the wrong path and need to be told as such. Perhaps those who may not want to move, and so at some point need to be told straight - 'There is a judgement and you are on the wrong side of it.'
- It reminds me of how the Apostle Paul spoke to the Jews in Rome in Acts 28(23-27) – from morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus, but when they rose to leave and reject the message his final appeal was to warn them of the coming judgement.
- Doom and gloom does not need to be the way we *enter* our gospel conversations, but for some, that will be what they need to hear.

Last, there are *those who have rejected the faith completely* - the heretics, the lost causes – verse 23

- Perhaps those who this letter has at points described are these people.
- And Jude says, '*show mercy mixed with fear*'.
- I think this is saying show pity and compassion, but do that fearfully, cautiously so that you might not get lost in their attitude or manner. Allow yourself to be revulsed by the stance that they take (the 'clothing stained by corrupting flesh') so that you also are not corrupted or drawn in.
- All the while remembering that we are not their judge – God is.

Contending for the faith requires great care.

*PAUSE*

Let's come back to the two different kinds of attack upon Christianity I mentioned earlier.

- If the attack is upon the *reasonableness of faith* – if the attack is on our minds - then to contend for the faith will be to offer the reasoned arguments and to engage apologetically.
  - Step *toward* the scoffer and step *up* to defend your faith.
  - Be equipped to offer the arguments for the reasonableness of faith – empirically, scientifically, historically.

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- And if you don't know how to do that, for heavens sake get trained – so that you can be a contender.
  - Under God, you have to be in it to win it.
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- And if the attack is on the *character of Christianity* – if the attack is on your emotions,
    - then to contend for the faith will be to love and live well before those who claim or think that Christianity is dangerous.
- Reframe the way the world views us – by demonstrating that following Jesus is not abusive or manipulative or coercive.
  - The world needs to see God's love and mercy, and they should see that in our love for one another and importantly our love for them – even if that means we suffer for it
  - Under God, you have to be in it to win it.

*PAUSE*

#### **Now unto him (vv. 24-25)**

- As you contend for this faith – Jude closes by reminding his readers – verse 24 - rest firmly in the knowledge that it is God who has your life in his hands – he is able to keep you from falling – and to present you without fault in joy – into his heavenly presence.
- One of the joys of salvation is that God is
  - able to keep you *from* something bad,
  - he is able to present you *before* something glorious,
  - and he accomplishes that all *through* someone remarkable – that is Jesus Christ the Lord.
- The letter closes, not with a prayer, but with a declaration – of something that was true, is true, and will always be true.
- *'To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now, and for evermore.'*
- And all the saints say – AMEN
- Friends, it is time to be a contender.