CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1:1-7

Key Verse: 1:3b

“I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Thank God for granting us an opportunity to study the book of Jude. Jude is in Hebrew Judah and in Greek, Judas. We all may shudder to hear the name Judas, who betrayed Jesus selling him for a certain amount of money, so became a horrible example of apostasy as the greatest apostate of all time. Interestingly God in his wonderful grace has chosen a man that has the same name to write this epistle on apostasy.

Here is one little book tucked right in between John’s three letters and the Revelation. This book of Jude seems to be hidden and neglected in between, especially n the shadow of the Revelation, just a passing epistle to the grand book Revelation. Yet, we see the significance of this book. In the Bible the beginning of the Church age is described in the Acts of the Apostles. The end of the Church age is dealt with in Jude, which might be called the acts of the apostates. Acts describes the deeds and teaching of men of God, through whom Christ began to build His Church. Jude, the last epistle, relates the deeds and teachings of apostates who will do everything they can to destroy the truth until the end of the Church. Jude is the only book in the Bible entirely devoted to discussing apostasy all the way out to the end of the Church age.

It is likely that 2 Peter was written to a group of Christians and Jude was sort of the sequel written to the same group. The two books are very closely related. Peter says, “the mockers, the scoffers, the false teachers will come.” 2 Peter was written about 68 or 69 AD. Jude, very close to that same period, after 2 Peter, perhaps just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., writes to say, “They are here. They have arrived.” Jude is not redundant. It is not just a repetition of 2 Peter; it is a fulfillment of 2 Peter. The apostasy has begun, and it’s going to go and grow until the Lord returns.

Now, this book is very important to us today. The apostasy was so serious in Jude’s day that he called for contending for the faith. It’s certainly more serious in our day, for it’s accumulated through all the centuries since that time: proliferation of quasi-Christian heretical cults, the development of liberalism, various kinds of false teachers using widespread media. An apostate Christianity seems to be sweeping the world. We ask for God’s mercy that we may be able to discern true Christian faith amid disfigured or distorted Christianity so that we can truly contend for the faith, the faith being the body of truth. Through the study of John’s three epistles, we thought about the truth concerning Jesus Christ, the true God, and walking in the truth, and working together for the truth. In Jude it is extended to contending or fighting for the truth. Today’s passage covers until verse 7.

**First, spiritual security and blessing (1-2).** Verse 1 says, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.” We know that James is a half-brother of Jesus, so then Jude also is so as a brother of James. James introduced himself as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ in James 1:1. Jesus’ brothers were unbelievers according to John 7:5, “For even his own brothers did not believe in him.” They could not understand Jesus’ way of living, not rising to the public with his power of doing miracles. They remained unbelieving, but after Jesus’ resurrection they were changed and here Jude was happy to identify himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, exactly meaning a bondservant, a salve to Jesus Christ. This indicates that Jude is really a spiritual man.

Verse 1 continues, “To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:” Most likely Jude was writing to the Jewish Christians whom he wants to be contenders for the truth. Then they must know about themselves, how they are connected to God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ. Here seems to be triple emphasis concerning their identity. They have been called by God, certainly chosen by him. It is God’s initiative. Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 1:10, “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.” We should be sure that it is God who chose and called us beginning a good work in us (Php 1:6). Jesus clearly said to his disciples in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you…” When one of the twelve disciples brought his friend Nathaniel to Jesus, Jesus said, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” At this Nathanael was puzzled and asked, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you” (John 1:47-48). This shows Jesus’ transcendental knowledge related to his initiative. He knew us and called us, setting us apart even from birth according to Apostle Paul (Gal 1:15). He said even in Ephesians 1:4, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world…” How can we fathom his choosing and calling grace!

Jude wrote further, “who are loved by God.” Surely God’s calling grace cannot be separated by his love. God’s Love is the motivation of all he does. We thought of God’s love a lot in 1 John. Apostle John exclaimed in 1 John 3:1, “How great is the love the Father lavished on us, that we should called children of God! And that is what we are!” God’s love is lavishing love, not sparing even his own son to the point of giving him as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. His love is pure and sacrificial. His love is perfect one, loving us first and never failing but enduring forever.

And the Jude says, “kept by Jesus Christ.” Jesus said in John 6:38-39, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me.” He also said in John 10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” Our eternal security is in God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 2 John greets, “Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.” In most epistles the greeting at the beginning is “Grace and peace to you.” But here, “mercy, peace and love.” The greeting “mercy, peace and love be yours” will be enough. In other translations, “Mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.” These three are already triple blessings. When they are multiplied to us, it will be more than the double of the triple blessings. Jude’s heart seems to be filled with assurance of security and blessing for those who contend for the truth. We believe that it is God’s rich heart for us, as we battle for the truth.

**Second, contending for the faith (3).** Now then Judesays in verse 3. “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write you to 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.” The goal of our faith is salvation of our souls written in 1 Peter 1:9. So Jude was very eager to write about salvation so that the recipients be filled with the assurance of salvation and joy and the direction to preach the gospel to perishing souls. But he felt compelled to write a more urgent thing at this point, that is, contending for the faith.

Here “contend” in other translations, “contend earnestly”, which is in Greek *epagónizomai*. This is a strong verb meaning to agonize, to fight, to struggle, to battle, to give great effort, to give great exertion. With the prefix preposition the meaning is intensified. So it becomes to contend earnestly or to battle mightily, or to struggle powerfully for the faith.

In verse Jude says, “…contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” It is notable that Jude says, “the faith”, not a faith.” It is not subjective but objective. There seem to be various kinds of faith, but the faith that saves is faith in Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 3:15 says, “how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” It is faith in the gospel. This is the faith of Abraham. Abraham had faith in the gospel, which God announced in advance. In his total hopeless situation he believed in God, and this was credited to him as righteousness. Those who believe are children of Abraham (Gal 3:7). Abraham is the man of faith. Galatians 3:9 says, “Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” It is written in Romans 1:17, “In the gospel a righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.” The gospel is the gospel of God originated from God. In Hebrews 11 there is the list of those whose lives were characterised “by faith”, written more than 20 times. They all had faith in God who created the universe. They believed in God Almighty in their adverse circumstances and pleased God with their faith. Hebrews 11 ends with these words, “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received that had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” Here that God had planned something better is the gospel of Jesus Christ. All the Old Testament saints had faith in Jesus Christ looking forward, and all the New Testament saints including us have faith in Christ Jesus looking backward. In an absolute sense faith is one, faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 4:5). We know that Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose again from the dead was ascended to heaven with the promise of coming again. Interestingly Jude wrote about Christ Jesus’ coming again twice, Enoch’s prophecy, “See, the Lord is coming…” and the foretelling of the apostles of the Lord Jesus, “In the last times there will be scoffers” who say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?” according to 2 Peter 3:4. So the faith is concretely faith in God’s creation and Christ’s death and resurrection and his coming again. This is the wholesome faith. Here Jude wrote very meaningfully, “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” “Once for all” is in Greek *hapax*, which refers to something done for all time, with lasting results, never needing repetition. And here “entrusted” is in other translations “delivered”: the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” So Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” How precious this gift of God is, the gift of faith!

It is very noticeable that a matchless great man of faith Paul said to his spiritual son Timothy, when the time came for his departure from this world, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim 4:7). What a confession of the great man of God! “I have kept the faith.” It was so painful for Paul to see those who had shipwrecked their faith (1 Tim 1:19). He said to Timothy in 6:20, “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.” And Jesus said in Luke 18:8, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” This is an amazing statement. We really need to keep our faith to the end.

Here Jude said “contend for the faith.” At that time two dominant heresies were legalism and antinomianism. Legalists claimed that people were saved by keeping the law and thus imposed circumcision and the law of Moses on the Gentile believers. It troubled Paul so much that he brought this matter to Jerusalem Council which reached to the decision that all are saved by the grace of he Lord Jesus Christ, certainly faith in him. Paul had written in Galatians 2:15-16, “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.” Here observing the law is the works of the law. In our time there are many people who believe that they can be saved by human good works. But Bible clearly declares that there is no one who is good, no one who is righteous before God (Rom 3:10). All our righteous acts are filthy rags. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Only by believing in Christ Jesus who was delivered to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification.

Now let’s think about antinomianism, which is related to licentiousness. They claim that since Christ Jesus died for all our sins, however we live do not affect our salvation. They say that the more sins, the more grace. In this way they justify their flesh life. According to Jude here, they changed the grace of God as a licence for immorality. Truly they are not true believers. In their own belief, they are mocking God. Those who truly believe Christ’s death on the cross for our sins, they hate sin and strive to live a holy life not only being justified but also being sanctified. Faith that does not have sanctification cannot be true faith.

Those who fall into legalism or antinomianism are all the enemies of the cross of Christ. Paul said in Philippians 3:28, “For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.”

How critical it is to contend for the faith! In our time in the name of liberalism so called believers or theologians take all the miracles out of the Bible including virgin birth, Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection from the death. They believe only on a level of human reason. Then, what they believe is not Christianity at all. Further more there are many believers who do not believe that God made male and female and they still become pastors. Majority of churches do not hold this truth of God’s creation. Even atheists become minsters. And they say that they are liberal and progressive Christians. Our modern Christianity seems to have gone too far. Why? We can say that the contenders for the faith became less and less until reaching this point. When we think of younger generations and the generations to come, how critical it is to contend for the faith! It starts with keeping the faith in me without any compromise at any circumstance to the end, as Paul said, “I have kept the faith” and teaching the truth of the faith to others beginning with one.

**Third, concerning certain men (4-7).** Verse 4 says, “For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.” While Jude said, “certain men”, Peter said, “false teachers.” Regarding their condemnation was written both in 2 Peter and Jude. They were marked out for condemnation. They have secretly slipped in among the Christian community. Those against whom the Lord Jesus and apostles had warned now have crept in unnoticed. Their presence was like spiritual virus in the body of Christ. The deadliest assaults against the truth come from the inside. This is what we call apostasy; it is a defection. The most effective attaches against the truth come from those people who purport to know the truth, and even to believe the truth. (Verse 4, 12).

As for Jude, first of all, they are godless men, men with out God. They had no God in their hearts and lives. In other words they had no fear of God. Here Jude further says about these men. They were godless, who change the grace of God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.” When they had no God in their hearts, they change the grace of God into a licence for immorality, as if God allowed immorality. Their ultimate purpose is to deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord. They will not live under the sovereign lordship of Christ. They twist and pervert teachings about Christ and the gospel.

And in verses 5 to 7, we get some insight into that condemnation by looking at three past judgments God has made on apostates: verse 5 about apostate Jews; verse 6, apostate angels; verse 7 apostate Gentiles. These three groups recount God’s wrath on past apostasies. And by the way, this passage is somewhat parallel to [2 Peter 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Pet%202.4)-8,  which mentions God’s judgment on angels, on the people alive at the time of the flood, and on Sodom and Gomorrah. And Jude uses two of these. He talks about the angels and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and he talks about the Jews instead of the people in the flood.

And he talks about apostate Jews first. Jude says in verse 5, “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.” This story is to be reminded again and again and really learn the lesson. How the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt is an incredible story with exhibition of the unprecedented mighty acts of God beginning with ten plagues on Egypt, Exodus, crossing the Red Sea, pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, manna from heaven, water from the rock, etc. But later God destroyed those who fell into unbelief. Particularly one event was so critical. According to God’s command, Moses sent two spies to explore the land of Canaan. They explored the same land, but there were two totally different reports. Ten gave a bad report with no faith, and the other two, a good report with faith. The bad report is that the enemies are too strong and so we cannot; the good report is that we can certainly do it. Those who gave bad report said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size…We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyed, and we looked the same to them.” (Num 13:32-33). This report made all the people of community weep aloud and grumble against Moses and Aaron. Even they said, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” But Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.” (Num 14:7-9). At this time God was so serious, saying, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?” (Num 14:11). Those who gave bed report died right there and all the wailing people were not allowed to enter the promised land, but only Caleb and Joshua. This showed that no one listened to the good report, the believing report. Jude says here, “the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.” Believing should be to the end. This event is written in Hebrews 3 and 4. Especially 3:12 says, “See to it, brothers that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.” Apostle Paul also mentioned this event and said in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warning for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.”

Why did Jude tell this story? It is notable that Jude did not write the doctrine of “certain men”, the apostates. But he described their lives so vividly throughout this book. Truly one’s life matters. What counts before God is one’s life of faith, believing in the living God. When one’s life of faith does not follow, he or she is in a great danger to fall into apostasy in the end. We should know that weak people become wicked people unless they overcome their weakness with faith in the living God. Here I am really warned about my falling into negative thoughts and unbelief from time to time for the ministry of God’s word in Toronto UBF mainly due to my lack of human qualities. But before God it is to treat him with contempt. I again ask God for his forgiveness for my sin of unbelief and ask for his mercy that I may really a believing Christian in my practical life, overcoming my weakness and really serve the ministry of God’s word in saving souls in U of T and raising disciples from this campus.

Jude continues in verses 6 and 7, “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. 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 life.” We should watch out for sexual immorality and perversion which are so prevalent in our time without any compromise whatsoever.

May we contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints!