



Ministry of the Word

***Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2018***

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Jude – Part 2, verses 3-4

**Subject:** Contend for the Faith

***“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. <sup>4</sup>For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Verse 3 opens up with Jude admitting, that when he sat down to write this letter, he originally wanted to write to them in relation to their Salvation. Jude makes it clear that this is a letter to only true believers in Christ, The Elect, The Sanctified, The Called of God who are preserved in Christ Jesus our Lord, due to his opening in verses 1&2 as well as him wanting to originally write to them conscientiously about their common Salvation. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul assured the believer that man naturally cannot receive or understand the things of God. Let me read this verse to you from the amplified Bible 1978 edition.

***“But the natural, none spiritual man, does not accept or welcome or admit into his heart the gifts and teachings and revelations of the Spirit of God. For they are folly (meaningless nonsense) to him: and he is incapable of knowing them (of progressively recognising, understanding and becoming better acquainted with them) because they are spiritually discerned and estimated and appreciated.”***

We know that in the early church there were numerous spiritual problems. There were different gospels being preached even at that early stage. Also, there were imposters and people who were putting their own slant on the gospel for their own benefit as well as arguments going on with the believers over positions and authority. 1 Corinthians 1:12 –

***“What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”***

There was trouble in the mist, all the more important to know and understand what the foundation of Salvation is all about, what does the scriptures say and what is God saying? Sounds familiar doesn't it! Imagine, all these problems in the early church and many had seen Jesus face to face. From conception there were spiritual battles, it's understandable then, that Jude wanted to write concerning their common salvation.

Jude used the expression in this verse “common salvation” which is the same expression Paul used in Titus 1:4. It simply means “the faith we believers share”. This common salvation as we know is not just a belief system but a world view. It's not a cultural or class change but brand new way of life, moving from being citizens of this world and all the connotations that brings, to becoming citizens of heaven and all the implications that it brings.

However, as he began to write, he was compelled to focus on something quite different. He was constrained strongly to encourage them to contend for their faith deeply, sincerely and seriously. It was a divine compulsion, the Holy Spirit put pressure on him to change just like in Acts 16:6-10 when Paul and his friends wanted to go into Asia and the Holy Spirit would not allow them, and again they tried to go to other places and the Holy Spirit would not allow. It was through a dream that the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul were they actually needed to go.

Also this compulsion is used in 1 Corinthians 9:16 –

***“For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!***

When the apostle said that he was compelled to preach, he didn't have a choice, it seems, in the matter. For this was his call and he couldn't get away from it hence why he said he couldn't boast because it wasn't a human longing to be heard.

Have you ever felt such compulsion to either do or say something, or not to do or not to say something? Have you done or not done it? Have you ever felt such compulsion to exhort others on in the faith or tell others the gospel? Have you every known the Holy Spirit compelling you on in the truth? How do you know when it's the Holy Spirit either leading you forwards, backwards, blocking you or telling you to wait?

Paul himself is a prime example . He sought confirmation either from the word or the gifts, even circumstances dictated. If in doubt, pray it out, wait and it will be revealed. It really comes down to you being found in Christ, in the Spirit. In other words, you must be walking obediently to God on a day to day basis, and be open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance, whether you like what he says or not. God has His ways and if you really want His way than wait until He say's go.

How do you know the difference between the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirit, either self or devil? Usually it has to do with motive and objectivity.

Often we as Christians, we want to do "the Christian" thing, like Paul going to Asia to preach the word. That wasn't a bad thing to want, was it? But just because it looks good doesn't mean that it is necessarily God's will for you, yes God has other people he wants to use believe it or not! Just as much, if you find yourself in prison, like Peter, it doesn't mean that you have gone off God's will! If we trust God, and obey God regardless of the consequence of circumstances around us, we will truly know it is God's will, because He will be glorify through it, and ultimately we will be blessed. This blessing may be growth, it may be a testimony, it may be something like a reward in Glory. This is a very big question, worthy of a more detailed study, but I hope that this will suffice for now.

As Jude continued to write, he told the believers that he wanted to exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith. Let's unravel that a bit.

### ***'Exhort'***

Jude wrote to the believers saying that he wanted to exhort them. This is a very precious word as the Greek word used here is "Parakaleo" which means not to just strongly urge them to do something, but to also comfort. The word of God is a tremendous "comfort" to the

people of God, we see this throughout the Bible. There are many examples, such as Acts 11:23:

*“When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:14:

*“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”*

Barnaba’s was known as an encourager and that’s a wonderful ministry to have. The church needs more Barnaba’s these days, we need to be encouraged in so many ways but also to keep going till the time when we will meet with the Lord. The best way of being encouraged is to encourage others not waiting for your “anointed” moment so to speak, but rising up to bless others, to serve the body. You don’t have to have a “supernatural” gift to do it, only a willing servants heart.

### **‘Contend’**

Jude wanted them to contend for the faith earnestly. What he is implying here is that he wanted them to contend for the truth of the gospel. But what is truth? You often hear that being asked today. Truth reflects reality, it does not consider relative truth, that is to say what you think is truth, your version of the truth, as they say today, my truth, your truth, no, not at all, Jude here is speaking about Biblical truth. The battle is not just what is true but what is the Truth. If the Bible in your hand is not true than what is? Do you see where this is going? This attack use to be from outside the church, but now it is from within. Hence the urgent need to understand more about Jude’s letter.

That word “contend” is a military expression, it is an active, continual present tense word. It means, to struggle to surmount a difficulty. Its object is to overcome. Take Jacob who contended with God found in Genesis 32. Let’s look at verse 22 first

*“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.”*

And then verse 26

*“Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”*

Jacob here not only wrestled physically but he would not let go until he was blessed... Do we contend with the Lord like this? Not letting go of him until he blesses us, until he answers our petitions? Yes, there are many examples of how people in the bible contended with the Lord for themselves as well as for others. For example Abraham contended with the Lord for Lot and his family. Elisha did the same for his servant because his servant was afraid. 2 Kings 6:17:

*“And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*

Often we need to contend for each other. Another example of contending is found in 1 Samuel 17 when David contended for his nation, let’s turn to it - 1 Samuel 17:45:

*“David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”*

But here, Jude is talking about contending for the faith. How can we contend for it today? Well, praying is a start, praying for the ministries, but also supporting them practically as well as prayerfully. Sometimes it may even be withdrawing support from ministries that are not honouring God or that are in error. If you are going to witness to people, then you can content not just when you are speaking to them but prepare by studying, equipping yourself to give the reason for the hope within. There are many more ways to content, but remember to content does not mean being contentious.

### **Faith**

So Jude wants them to uphold the strong belief in all the doctrines found in all of the Scriptures. Let’s take this Faith he wants them to contend for, a little further. Look at 1 Corinthians 13:5, the amplified gives this verse great weight.

*“Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected?”*

You see “faith” is something that is more than mere intellectual accent to the truth, as James pointed out in James 2:18-22.

*“But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?”*

Faith is not just a matter of the head but it is also a matter of the heart. It is an absolute reliance on the Lord. It is the exercise of what we know. Paul related to Timothy, in 1 Timothy 3:9 when speaking about church deacons and elders.

*“They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.”*

The saying “if you don’t use, it will lose it” is very true when it comes to faith not salvation. Faith needs to have substance not superficiality. Faith is the complete reliance upon God and His word which means that a believer is totally dependent and confident in God.

*“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.”* Hebrews 11:1&2

Paul told Timothy that in the end time that many will leave or turn away from the faith in 1 Timothy 4:1

*“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”*

Many, in the end times, will be attracted to whatever else and everything else but the truth as contained in the Bible. We can see this happening today, many preaching different gospels, such as “Living your best life now” and many other mind boggling counterfeits including seeing new-age practices coming into the church, for example ‘Christian yoga’. The bible is very clear that in the latter days, it will be characteristic of the era. It will be the norm, and is the norm even today. Satan’s plan is if you can’t get them from without, try within.

Paul gave very sound advice to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16:13 and we today do well to keep it.

*“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.”*

How do we do this, because it is obvious that contending for the faith means that we are stewards of the gospel and we need to protect its integrity. Therefore, this calling requires us to hold fast to the truths contained in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We should not, nor allow anyone else to add or subtract from the word. Deuteronomy 4:2

***“Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.”***

Revelation 22:18 - ***“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll.”***

The Lord instructed His people many times to hold His word sacred. We see countless times the statement by the prophets, “The Lord said”. God spoke but was His word always held sacred? The answer is no, it was not. The problem here is if you don’t hold His word sacred then, it follows you won’t hold Him sacred. The accounts of idolatry and apostasy are too numerous to mention. These bring terrible consequences still today. If we water down the truth, who are we then worshipping, Galatians 1:6&7

***“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.”***

The claim then and now, the cry of the unbelieving, is, that God’s word is not relevant and should be “done away with!” The true story of Voltaire is brilliant on this score. He prophesied that in his day, around the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, that in 300 years the Bible would no longer exist. Today His house is the HQ for the Bible press! The worst thing we can do apart from adding and subtracting is to chain-bound the word so that it will be safe, in other words don’t read, learn or preach it! Our faith that Jude refers to, is to uphold the truth and we are to use the word of God as a defence as well as an offense which is why we are to put on the full armour as advised in Ephesians 6. Faith that is not exercised will never be energised by the Holy Spirit of God. You will have a “library” faith but not a living one. To do that we must first encounter God before we engage man in the Gospel. The difference between religion and relationship with God is the same as the difference between life and death.

#### Verse 4

*“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

As we come to this verse it clearly outlines the purpose for this letter, why there was urgency for it to be written, *certain men have crept in unnoticed, ungodly men*. The Lord spoke about this in Matthew 13:24-30 in His parable of the tares among the wheat. This parable troubled the disciples so much so they could not wait until it was explained see verses 36-43. Subversives crept in even into the early church, Galatians 2:4-5. Paul often wrote about the many dangers he face during the course of his ministry, 2 Corinthians 11:26:

*“in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;”*

Note his remark, he counted part of the perils he faced were *“false brothers”*. This is a problem that will not go away, or be hushed. It is due to increase according to Jesus. Apostasy, is the sign of the times - 2 Timothy 4:3-5 tells us:

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup>and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. <sup>5</sup>But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.”*

We have mentioned the word “apostate” many times, but what is an apostate? Let’s turn to Luke 8:13-15.

*“But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. <sup>14</sup>Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. <sup>15</sup>But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”*

This parable explains apostasy well for us. Apostates don’t have horns on their heads or forks in their hands, they don’t necessarily shout “down with God”. Look at verse 13 for the classic definition. *“these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away”*. So apostates proclaimed the word at some point in their lives, but do not truly

possess it because it was truly never rooted in their lives, hence why Jesus said, “By their fruits you will know them”. Fruit takes time to bloom, it’s a process but it does bloom at some point but these apostates’ fruit wither and die. “They can be very showy” but like all shows they come to an end. They demonstrate joy but not life because they have no root.

An apostate is not necessarily one who is indifferent to the word nor even in error of the truth, nor even get tangled up in heresies but they simply reject the truth of God. We can see example of these types of apostates in the Bible, particularly in the Gospels and Epistles. They received the light but not life, they received the truth in the head but not in their heart. They had life looking at them but not living in them. The prime example is Judas Iscariot, to be sure a stand-alone character, or is he? I do be surprised when believers try to make a case for him, as if it was not his fault that he did what he did, sure Jesus loved him. They seem to forget what Jesus said of him in Luke 22:22, Mark 14:10&20, Matthew 26:14-16, let’s look at Matthew 26:24-25

*“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”<sup>25</sup> Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.”*

Jude said that these men crept in, not secretly but softly, quietly, unashamedly. It was the people around them who were not aware of their intent or agenda. However they came, and still come today. Apostates all have the same marks which Jude points out in verse 4:

- 1) Ungodly
- 2) Pervert the grace of God
- 3) Deny our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ

Jude give us three examples in verse 11 which we will look at later, Cain, Balaam and Korah. I mention it now because these example in verse 11 demonstrate these marks explicitly for Cain was ungodly, Balaam perverted the grace of God and Korah denied the Lord.

- 1) **Ungodly** - means an individual who is destitute of reverence for the living God. They do not have reverence for their Creator. 2 Timothy 3:5, Romans 1:18, Philippians 3:10.

“The heart is deceitful above all things”, this teaching is found throughout the Old Testament. Remember this is a heart issue not an appearance issue. Note to who Jesus pointed this out

too. It was not to the traders, the tent makers, the tax gatherers but it was to the religious see John 8:42-47, especially verse 47 –

*“He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”*

The same argument with the same people is still going on today and it’s the religious believers, the ecumenicist, the new age church, the latest/new reformed and whatever else you have, and yes, they are the charismatic leaders, authors, pulpit stars and jet setter. They are the rich and the reckless of the religious world, shepherds that lead people to a lost eternity. But not all who are ungodly, are necessary at the pulpit either. They can be sitting in the pew as well as the man on the street.

2) **Perverting the grace of God** is the second mark that Jude indicates.

Paul exhorts us to live upright in Titus 2:11-12 –

*“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup> teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,”*

We have freedom in Christ. We are not in bondage to the world (system) to sin (that which corrupts and destroys) or to Satan (the destroyer).

But these people, these godless characters want to destroy by perverting the grace of God. How can they do this? It can be a legal system like religious practices that alters the meaning of the words of Christ, for example, introduce a works righteous system as means to Salvation. It can be perverted by an authority that takes control of how you can become right with God, how sins are forgiven, or not forgiven. When we look at the world’s religious, man is often at the centre and in control. God is out of the picture really, only appears when it is convenient. Then there is the opposite to that, the liberals, where everything goes, maybe not all at once, but its licences to do what is in your “heart”! Customs, traditions, loyalties, ideologies, anything, that gets in the way of God and his work of Grace, as well as his standard causes perversion of the Grace of God. We don’t need to spend time outlining their aims. Simply they seek to destroy your walk with the Lord and the word of God. They seek to annihilate God’s finished work of the cross.

- 3) Deny the Lord: They refuse to give God his place and refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Master.

There are basically 4 ideas embodied in this

- I. The denial of the Sovereign God. God's supreme power and authority is unique of God alone. It's one of his Holy attributes. When we deny this God ceases to be God.
- II. The denial of the Lord Jesus as Lord in and over the true believers' lives. The apostasy does not hold to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His right to Judge.
- III. The denial of Christ as Messiah, Christ the anointed one. They deny Jesus is the promised Messiah forth-told about in the prophecies of the Old Testament and continue on in the denial of the trinity. They deny His oneness with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- IV. The denial of Jesus our Saviour, His power to forgive sin alone. In particular, they deny His work of atonement on the cross.

2 Timothy 2:12&13 says –

*“If we endure, we will also reign with Him;  
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;  
If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”*

The opposite of these ought to be true for the Saints, not only in their profession but also in their practice. We are all aware that God's people should stand out from the crowd and they do when their words are back up by the walk and works.

James says it in chapter 2 verse 18 –

*“But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”*

So many want what you have, if it's the real deal, they want to know real peace, joy and forgiveness to name just a few things. Unfortunately, they come across the professors and hypocrites, all talk and no walk. Of course, there is none like that in this fellowship?

For the believer, as we start to look into Jude, it will become even more evident of how we can be caught unawares by these imposters. In the days which we live, these are vital teachings if we want to faithful walk in the faith and be able to content for it. Many can blow a trumpet but few can play a sweat melody on it. We need to practice to stay in tune.

*Amen.*