

The Books of Titus, Philemon, and Jude

Lesson 9: Contend for the Faith -- Jude 1-4

Sometimes you sit down to write one letter and end up writing another. Jude tells us exactly that happened to him. “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith” (v. 3). He had wanted to write a warm, encouraging letter about the great salvation believers share. But news reached him that something was wrong in the churches, an infiltration so serious that he set aside his happy subject and picked up an urgent one. Some letters are written from joy; this one was written from alarm.

Jude introduces himself humbly as “a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James” (v. 1). Most scholars believe he was the half-brother of Jesus Himself, yet he does not lead with that. He calls himself a servant. And he addresses his readers with three beautiful words: they are “called,” “beloved in God the Father,” and “kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1). Before he says a single word of warning, he reminds them how secure they are in God’s love. That is important, because what follows is sobering, and we read warnings best when we are standing on the solid ground of grace.

Then comes the alarm. “For certain people have crept in unnoticed,” Jude writes, ungodly people who “pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (v. 4). Notice the word “crept in unnoticed.” These were not enemies storming the gates; they had slipped quietly inside the church, twisting the message of grace into a license to sin and, in effect, denying the Lord by the way they lived. The danger was internal, subtle, and spiritual. And so Jude issues his great call: contend earnestly “for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3).

That phrase, “once for all delivered,” is the anchor of the whole letter. The faith is not a living thing that evolves with the times, not a tradition each generation is free to revise, not a foundation waiting for fresh revelations to complete it. It was delivered, once for all, to the saints. Our job is not to update it but to guard it, hold it, and hand it on intact. As you read these four short verses, ask the Lord to give you both the security of those who are kept by Him and the courage of those who will contend for the truth He has entrusted to us.

Group Discussion: Jude urges believers to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). What does it mean that the faith was delivered “once for all,” and what does that imply about claims to new revelations, updated truth, or a gospel that evolves with the culture? How can a congregation contend earnestly for the truth without becoming combative or unloving?

Personal Reflection: Jude reminds his readers that they are “called,” “beloved in God the Father,” and “kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1) before he ever warns them of danger. How securely do

you actually rest in being loved and kept by God? When threats and troubles come, do you face them from a place of security in His love, or from anxiety? What would change if you truly believed you are kept by Him?

Read Jude 1-4

Study Questions

1. Jude identifies himself simply as “a servant of Jesus Christ” (v. 1), though he was likely the Lord’s own half-brother. What does this humble self-description teach about true greatness in the kingdom of God and about the proper posture of anyone who serves Christ?
2. Jude calls his readers “beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (v. 1). Do you tend to think of yourself primarily as beloved and kept by God, or do other identities (your failures, your roles, your reputation) speak louder? What would it look like to let God’s words define you this week?
3. Jude says he changed his subject because he “found it necessary” to urge them to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3). What does it mean that the faith was “once for all delivered,” and how does this truth guard the church against claims of ongoing new revelation or an evolving gospel?
4. Jude calls every believer, not just leaders, to “contend” for the faith (v. 3). Are you equipped to recognize and lovingly answer error when you encounter it? Where do you most need to grow in knowing the truth well enough to defend it, and what is one step you could take toward that?
5. Jude warns that “certain people have crept in unnoticed” (v. 4), describing false teachers who infiltrate rather than openly attack. Why is this kind of internal, subtle corruption often more dangerous to the church than open opposition from outside, and how does Scripture call us to watch for it?
6. Jude says the danger had “crept in unnoticed.” Where might subtle compromise be creeping into your own heart or habits unnoticed, small allowances that, left unchecked, could pull you off course? What is one area where you need to pay closer attention before it grows?
7. Jude charges the false teachers with two things: they “pervert the grace of our God into sensuality” and “deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (v. 4). How is turning grace into a license for sin actually a denial of Christ, and what does this teach about the inseparable link between truly receiving grace and submitting to Jesus as Lord?
8. Jude says these people used grace as a cover for sensuality. Is there any place where you have quietly used grace as an excuse, telling yourself a sin does not matter because you are forgiven anyway? How does the lordship of Christ confront that thinking in your life?
9. Jude grounds his entire appeal in the conviction that the apostolic faith is complete, fixed, and to be defended against those who would distort it. Drawing on the whole New Testament, why do we hold that the faith was delivered once for all and that the completed Scriptures, not new prophecies or continuing revelation, are our authority today? Why does this matter so much for the church?

10. Look back across these four verses. Jude has shown you a humble servant, a people kept by God, a faith worth contending for, and a danger that creeps in quietly. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Jude 1-4 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4, all Scripture as God-breathed and the charge to preach the word as people turn to myths; Galatians 1:6-9, no other gospel, even from an angel; 2 Peter 2:1-3, false teachers secretly bringing in destructive heresies; Acts 20:28-31, fierce wolves arising from within the church; Hebrews 1:1-2, God's final word spoken in His Son.