Contend for the Faith

Jude 1-25

Introduction: The Beatles released the single "Hey Jude" in August of 1968. The song was written by Paul McCartney in response to John Lennon's divorce from his wife Cynthia. The couple had a son named Julian and Paul went to visit the son, knowing he would be devastated by the breakup of his parents. The song was originally entitled "Hey Jules".

The song is more than seven minutes long and, at the time, the longest single ever to top the British charts. It also spent nine weeks at number one in the United States. This Jude was famous.

However, there is another Jude that precedes the song who hasn't garnered as much airtime or attention. It too is a single, self-titled, one-chapter book in the Bible that seems almost unnoticed before the much more attention-grabbing book of Revelation!

It's just one brief chapter, with 25 verses, but they are power packed and have a tremendous message for us.

Its author is Jude, who is referred to in the fourteenth chapter of John as "not Iscariot," and describing himself here as "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James." The James to whom he refers as his brother is the author of the Epistle of James, of which he and Jude both were literal brothers of Jesus, born of the same mother. **Let's read it.**

"1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. 4 For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. 7 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 fire.

8 In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings. 9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" 10 Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.

11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.

12 These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. 13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones 15 to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." 16 These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

17 But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. 18 They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." 19 These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

20 But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

<u>Doxology -</u> 24 To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— 25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." [NIV]

Let's Pray

<u>Recap recent events.</u> Our calling hasn't changed and I want to talk about it this morning. The title of my message is from verse three where Jude tells us to: **Contend for the Faith.**

Just so you know, Jude is not the first mention of false teachers found in the New Testament, but it is interesting that most of the others come as warnings, whereas **<u>Jude writes that the infiltrators are already here.</u>**

Jesus warns us in Matthew 24:11; ***"and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."***

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."***

Peter warns us that false teachers would come in 2 Peter 2:1; ***"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves."***

In II Timothy 3:1-5 it says that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Another one of the characteristics given to us is in I Timothy 4:1 where it says, ***"Now the Spirit (Holy Spirit) speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."***

We see that before the Lord returns there will be a period when there will be a departure or a falling away from the faith. But in JUDE the false teachers are HERE.

Jude 4 "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.

You may recall in II Thessalonians 2, that chapter about end-times prophecy, Paul specifically says that the Lord will not return until there is a falling away first. The words translated, *falling away*, and *depart from the faith* in 1 Timothy 4:1, are basically the same words.

They are also the words from which we get our English word, ***apostasy.***

Sometimes the word was used for a divorce; describing when a couple fell apart from one another. The Bible predicts that in the last days there will be an apostasy. There will be a falling away, a departure from the faith.

So, apostasy is teaching which falls away from the teaching of Scripture. An apostate is one who teaches these doctrines that deviate from the teachings of Scripture.
John MacArthur points out that it might be that Jude is placed just before Revelation because the book of Jude accurately describes the condition of the Church in the days preceding the Lord's return.

This status accurately describes the condition of the Church from the Apostolic days until now, a condition that will continue through the end of the Church age and the return of Christ.

Jude shows us what apostasy will be like in the end days. The Apostle Paul warned about the apostasy. He says in Acts 20, concerning the end time. In verse 29-30 he says, ***"For I know this; that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."***

Paul indicated that there would be a two-fold assault on the church in the end times. There would be an assault from the outside -- persecution.

There would also be an assault from the inside- perverse men, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. So Paul is warning us of apostasy and apostates.

Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." So, Jesus predicted apostates -- those who would come appearing to be sheep.

In verse 3-4 he tells us why you need to contend for the faith. He says, **“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. 4 For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.” [NIV]**

"Certain men crept in unawares." The word there literally means to enter alongside. To slip in the side door. To worm their way in. To infiltrate. The picture was used of a criminal who had been exiled from a land by secret slipping back into the country. It's the picture of an alligator on the banks of a stream, silently, subtly slithering into the water to do its

damage.

Illustration: It was the winter of 1944. The German army was in a desperate situation and ultimately launched what became known as the Battle of the Bulge. A key part of their strategy was to disrupt and misdirect reinforcements that the Allies would be sending into the battle. They called it "Operation Grief" and they sent German spies dressed as US Military Police who infiltrated the American line where they setup roadblocks and directed military units the wrong way. The plot was quickly discovered and 18 of the infiltrators were caught and tried and executed. Even though the plan fell apart quickly, the greatest damage came afterward. Soldiers did not know who to trust, and several American soldiers were killed for not answering questions about the United States correctly. (Paul Barreca, Sermoncentral.com)

An INFILTRATOR can cause great damage. And so, it is with the CHURCH. The tiny book of Jude warns us about infiltrators in the church. He's talking about how the apostates operate. They come slipping in. They come in under false pretenses. They pretend to be one thing, but in actuality, they are something else. They use our vocabulary, but not our dictionary.

He says earnestly contend because there are men who have crept in unawares and they turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, which means unashamed lust. He says the apostates will use the grace of God as an excuse to sin. They say, "because we are under God's grace, we can live as we please and it won't matter." The Bible says, ***"the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*** (Titus 2:11-13) God's grace is not an excuse for sin.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 talks about people who are deceived by those who oppose Jesus. It says that ***'They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."***

You see, it's critical that we contend for the faith once delivered to the saints because people will go to hell if we don't stand up for our faith.

What drives these godless individuals is their bias. And what is their bias? Jude tells us: "**They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."**

They want what they want from Christianity and they're not above changing the rules whenever it suits them. They pervert the Grace of God. They deny Jesus is our master and lord. They don't want God telling them how to live. They want to live how THEY want to live and they want the church to be ok with that.

A few verses later Jude compares these people to 3 godless characters from Scripture:

1. ***First***, he starts with a Cain (Cain and Abel) ***"Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain."*** Cain's problem was that he was filled with hate. When he couldn't get things his way he got ticked and he killed his brother.

I John 3:12, 14-15 tells us: ***"We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous...We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."***

A CAIN kind of worshipper is someone who thinks they can come to church and harbor hatred in their hearts. This kind of person infiltrates the congregation with their hatred. They spread their bitterness like venom. And after a while people take sides. One group begins to gravitate toward the angry person and say things like "I never liked that guy either."

An INFILTRATOR who imitates Cain is driven by anger and bitterness.

2. Now there are others who have ***'abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error'*** Balaam was an Old Testament

prophet who sold out for money. Israel had just left Egypt and was on its way to the Promised Land passing thru the land of Moabites. The Moabites weren't excited about that, so they tried to hire Balaam to curse Israel. They knew if Balaam would curse the Israelites, they would be truly cursed and easily defeated.

But God had a little talk with Balaam about that ...and for a while Balaam listened to God. But eventually the money was just too good, and ultimately Balaam found a way to compromise the morality of many of the Israelites. And when all was said and done God ultimately punished him for his disobedience.

An infiltrator of the church who imitates Balaam is one who is impressed with money.

James warns us against this: ***"My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."*** James 2:1-9

3. The third group of infiltrators are the KORAH worshippers. Jude 11 tells us that these folks are like those who ***"perished in Korah's rebellion."*** Who was Korah? Well, he was a guy that didn't like the idea of Moses running things. He thought he could do a better job and so he staged a rebellion to remove and replace Moses and

Aaron as leaders of the nation. As you can imagine, God wasn't real pleased with that.

Numbers 16:28-33 tells us that Moses said, ***"This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt."***

As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.

What motivated Korah and his followers? They wanted to run things. They wanted to be in charge. When things weren't done their way they become very annoyed and they created a power struggle in the "church".

An infiltrator of the church who imitates Korah, push to CONTROL the church.

Jesus said He will build His church, and we all need to let Him do it.

These three people are given as illustrations; Cain who was self-righteous; Balaam whose sin was greed; and Korah whose sin was presumption. All these are contrary to faith. **Where faith fails, morality fails. Wherever you find it, immorality is denial of faith.**

In Acts 2 we are told that the early church continued in the Apostles' doctrine. That's what he's talking about here. He says, ***"the faith that was once delivered to the saints."*** It's something that has been

handed over. The word, deliver, literally means to hand over. It means to pass on.

What is the faith? It's the basic doctrines, the basic truths of the faith. There are some truths that are essential to the Christian faith and if you take away any of them, then you don't have the Christian faith.

See that word, *once*. Literally the word should be translated --once for all delivered. He is saying that what we have in our Bible is the full and the final revelation of God's spiritual truth.

In Revelation 22:18-19, it says, ***For I testify unto every many who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life...***

Apostasy either tries to add to the Bible or take away from the Bible. God says to earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints.

Summary: Briefly summed up, the false teachers against whom he directs the larger portion of his epistle, were as follows:

1. Certain men had crept in unawares, and, through their personal and malicious influence, error and sin were being communicated and circulated. The false seed consists not merely in false doctrine, but in living embodiments of it.

2. The character of their false teaching was "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." They abused the doctrine of divine grace by proclaiming liberty to sin because of Christ's salvation. They especially encouraged and practiced the sin of moral uncleanness. Jude speaks of them again in the eighth verse as "filthy dreamers" who "defile the flesh"; and in the sixteenth verse as "walking after their own lusts." In the tenth verse he uses still more realistic language in describing their coarse and brutal depravity: "What they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves."

3. The result of their teaching and their lives is "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. These wicked men were also intolerant of all spiritual authority, self-willed, and scornful of the restraints and the warnings of those that were over them in the Lord.

The one word translated "contend" occurs nowhere else. The root of the word is found in the New Testament in other applications; where it is said for instance that Epaphras strove in prayer.

We are not asked to defend the faith by arguing for it. What then is the thought of the word? It is that of passionate and determined effort.

What is the faith for which we are to contend?

For the Church. The faith once for all delivered to the saints; that is, the whole system of truth. What is the system of truth? That truth is centered in a Person. That Person is the Person of these New Testament revelations; the Person of the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles. The Person is seen in the flesh in the gospels; but is interpreted by the Spirit in the apostolic writings. That is the faith. It is that truth embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ, operating in grace and holiness, for which we are to contend.

For the Individual Christian. What is the contending which defends the faith? Constant loyalty to Christ; ceaseless caution in the presence of things contrary to His will; courage and confidence.

By these things we shall indeed defend the faith. It is possible for a man to attempt to defend the faith by argument, while actually destroying it by his own life, by his own character.

Jude reminds them that they must "earnestly contend" for this faith. The enemy will try to destroy it, either by discrediting the Word of God, or by keeping us from fully believing it.

There is no new Bible for modern times, and there is no part of the old Bible that is obsolete. Are we believing and living every bit of it and proving in our lives that Jesus Christ and His Word are "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"?

The final argument for faith in the world is not the argument of words, but the argument of life.

Closing: Jude wrote this letter before the Fall of Jerusalem, which took place in 70 A.D. I am increasingly persuaded that the apostle John wrote the book of the Revelation prior to 70 A.D. That being the case, Jude would have heard about false teaching and heresy creeping in to the churches in Asia Minor. Of the seven churches mentioned by John in Revelation, only two do not receive a rebuke (Smyrna and Philadelphia). Five of the churches mentioned in the book of Revelation receive a rebuke:

1. Ephesus—for a loss of first love (2:1-7);

2. Pergamum—for false teaching (2:12-17);

3. Thyatira—for a lack of discernment and a toleration of heresy (2:18-29);

4. Sardis—for dead works (3:1-6); and

5. Laodicea—for being spiritually blind, bankrupt, naked, and lukewarm (3:14-22).

Within a generation of Jesus' death, the church was already being infiltrated by false teaching and heresy.
That is why Jude found it necessary to write to Christians to address this very serious problem that was coming into the church.

So, our mission as a church and as individuals has not changed.

1. We Contend for the Faith Because God has Called Us! (V. 5-6)

2. We Contend for the Faith Because of God has saved us from judgment

3. We Contend for the Faith because the TRUTH doesn't change. (V. 3)

4. We Contend for the Faith because Infiltrators Corrupt the Message (12-16)

FYI - To contend for the faith doesn't mean that you must be contentious.

Take Aways: Four things we ought to do to contend for the faith.

1) ***Study the faith.*** Know what the Bible teaches.
2) ***Show the faith*** by the way you live. Let people see the faith in your life.
3) ***Share the faith***. Tell others about Christ.
4) ***Stand for the faith***.

Finally, Jude closes with this beautiful doxology: ***"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God and Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."***

1. He speaks of ***"him that is able to keep you from falling."*** This is an inadequate translation. Literally it means from "stumbling." He is not only able to keep us from the great falls, but from the slightest missteps.

2. He is ***"able . . . to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."*** This is His purpose. He is taking us through all processes of His grace and all the discipline of His love.

3. He is here described as "the only wise God our Savior." This is a glorious name, and it is given to Jesus, the Son of man, our blessed Savior.