

"PUSHING BACK" *The Contending for the Faith*

The Book of JUDE

by Pastor Tim Dodson, July 19th, 2015

at Jesus Fellowship of Believers, Menomonie WI



1 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: 2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. 3 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. 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. 5 But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. 8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 12 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; 13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. 14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." 16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. 17 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

Jude begins this letter with a seemingly insignificant passing remark which in fact lays down a singular dynamic preface to what he is going to say herein. For Jude...brother of James and no doubt the half brother of Jesus Himself, calls himself a "bond slave" to Christ. Such a title is truthfully not easily worn nor lightly bestowed! While being a bond slave does not save you nor does it make Jesus love you even more, it should however be the supreme life goal for everyone of us that so willingly takes His love, the redemption of the cross and the 'ticket to paradise' after we leave this place. It is our "reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

It is the "doulos"... the 'bond slave' that is owned by and totally possessed by his master. It is he who exists for his master alone and for no other reason and no other goal. The bond slave has no personal rights. For he surrendered them when he chose to be a bond slave. He is at the master's disposal "24/7". He does not negotiate a "deal" for "his time" verses "service time." For it all belongs to the master! He has no will of his own but is completely subservient to the master.

This is the guy who writes this letter. A "doulos"... a "bond slave." Few honestly are able to wear that t-shirt. It's been said that there is one sure way to tell if you are indeed a bond slave, and that is by the way you react when you are treated like one. That person is rare in a world of 'customers' and a culture of 'takers.'

Jude writes to those of the same “persuasion.” Those who are “called, sanctified...or *set apart*” by God, and preserved or “*kept secure*” in Jesus Christ. That being said, I cannot say that this letter is “your mail” today, although it will shine the light of that kind of relationship so that you might honestly and faithfully see yourself in its clarity.

Ezekiel 3:16-21 - *After seven days the LORD gave me a message. He said, “Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for Israel. Whenever you receive a message from me, warn people immediately. If I warn the wicked, saying, ‘You are under the penalty of death,’ but you fail to deliver the warning, they will die in their sins. And I will hold you responsible for their deaths. If you warn them and they refuse to repent and keep on sinning, they will die in their sins. But you will have saved yourself because you obeyed me. “If righteous people turn away from their righteous behavior and ignore the obstacles I put in their way, they will die. And if you do not warn them, they will die in their sins. None of their righteous acts will be remembered, and I will hold you responsible for their deaths. But if you warn righteous people not to sin and they listen to you and do not sin, they will live, and you will have saved yourself, too.”*

In this letter by Jude, he launches quickly into a passionate outpouring ...a call to “contend earnestly” for the faith. As in the call to Ezekiel in chapter 3 of the Book of Ezekiel, there is an unmistakable tone. A seriousness...a daunting aspect to the marching orders that are so delivered herein. Jude makes the call with a level of intensity that we rarely if ever attribute to spiritual issues. There is in the original language of this text, aspects of great effort. The call to “strive”...to *struggle* and *exert effort*. This word group here gives us our English word “agony!” This draws the picture of Jude’s great turmoil and pain concerning these “creepers” (vs 4). The irony is not lost on the fact that there are situations and images that we admire and aspire to that encompasses the picture of the committed athlete, the passionate outpouring, the sacrifice and the emotion, yet rarely does the things of God move any one of us in such a manner, despite claims of devoted love and dedication! The fact is, you never fight the Lord’s battles from a rocking chair or a soft bed! You will never move the world unless you first move yourself!

Perhaps we are left wanting for clarity...for an *elaboration*. Just how do we accomplish such a task? How do we...so small and perhaps perceived inconsequential in a small and insignificant location ...how do we actually affect such a realm? How can *we* contend for the faith? We’re nobody and we’re nowhere! Do we arm up or register at a seminary? Peter, in his first epistle (*1Pe 3:15*), tells us how we are to do so. He says that we should “be ready always to give an answer” to the opposition. The words “give an answer” in the Greek is a technical term of the law courts, speaking of the attorney for the defense “presenting a verbal defense” for his client. Such a call speaks intensely to many of us as we so often just seek to keep our heads down and out of the gunfire!

But Jude is not letting anyone who bears the name of Christ to stand down. No one gets to take the passive position. There are no “conscientious objectors” in this war. A war that many confessed believers refuse to even acknowledge is happening! Yet Jude is certainly not alone in the ‘call to arms!’ Paul warned the elders at Ephesus...*Therefore be on the alert, (present imperative = command for continual alertness so as to be able to detect savage wolves) remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.* (Acts 20:31) In fact, throughout scripture we are repeatedly reminded that we are in a “life and death” spiritual battle (Eph 6:10-13; 1Th 5:8; 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 2:4, 4:7), in a competition against the forces of evil. (1Co 9:24,25; 2Ti 2:5)

The tendency...the great temptation, is to ‘go easy’...grease the path...level the hills and avoid difficulty, confrontation, and embrace the modern call for “tolerance.” One that in reality means passive surrender, situational truth, and “looking the other way.” Not only for others, but for us too. We don’t want to push anyone else and we don’t want to be pushed! So it works out rather well! Except of course for God, his kingdom advance, and our relationship with Him. Not to mention the thousands of people lost for eternity because of our apathy and self-centeredness...

Contending for the faith does not mean we are to (or even *allowed to*) be mean and aggressively hurtful. John already dealt with that issue in all three of his epistle letters, repeatedly calling us to truth but always *truth in love*. That may indeed be a brash pushing-one-out-of-the-way of a speeding train, but it’s not kicking someone in the spiritual shins because they won’t see things the same way as you do! Jesus was stark, blunt, honest and open. But He also was always gracious, gentle and loving!

Jude remarks in his text that these corrupt elements will not remain ‘out there’ someplace, but will indeed “come in amongst you.” They will come to church, they will involve themselves in the church, and they will pretend to care about you. But in the end...as John has already told us in his epistle letters, (1 John 2:19) after consuming all they can get and causing a ruckus, they will finally depart “*out from us*” because “*they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that were not of us.*”

According to our text, these folks will attempt to turn grace into an excuse to sin. They say they are "free in Christ", but the freedom is not to do as we please, but rather to choose who we will follow...ourselves or the master: to be a slave of Christ, or a slave to our own fleshly passions. It does not mean we can stipulate the working conditions...the parameters of what this relationship with Christ is as so scripturally prescribed. These folks will constantly seek the free pass...the "get-out-of-jail-free" card, and they will eventually and surely deny Jesus Christ. Please note the specifics of the text: *Jude is not saying they will necessarily deny what He has said...nor deny He is the Son of God, but they will deny HIM.* They will say 'no' to Christ! "*I won't be obedient... I won't have a teachable spirit. I won't humble myself...I won't be accountable...and I won't take my place in the body. I won't serve Him. I won't let Him prune me. I won't submit.*"

What is our roll herein as to the "contending for the faith?" What does it look like on a practical realm? Because we really need to get this right! And the greater church is woefully inadequate and seriously failing in this area. The cry of "judge not and you will not be judged!" emanates from the grandstands of the American church and shouts of "tolerance, tolerance" from the seats of the opposing team, with the faithful few caught in the middle like the gladiator games in the coliseums of old!

So...are we to be the executioner? **No.**

The judge? **Absolutely.**

1 Peter 4:17 "*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*"

1 Corinthians 6: 2-5 "*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?"*

It's all such a daunting call! So very intimidating! Yes! And that's the way it **should** be! Important things...necessary things, are often scary, and for good reason. Such matters are not to be handled flippantly or without regard to the consequences of the fallout. Paul understood this and lived this out when he says in 1 Corinthians 2 "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. **However,** we speak wisdom among those who are mature..."*

"*However...*" Even though it is hard and troubles me greatly to have to do it! "*However I have to say this to you just the same...*" The alternative is surrender. The only other choice is to let the wolves dine and the false teachers corrupt.

Just who are these guys? Do they dress all in black and sinister music plays when they walk by? No...not generally! Remember...Satan often comes disguised as an "angel of light." (2 Cor 11:14) Well, what are we talking about then? Robbing, killing, maiming? Is this the sins of genocide and burning villages? No. Look at the list: Verse 8...they "defile the flesh." *Ya...ok...we can see how we would need to get after that issue.* But let's go on!...those that "reject authority" and those that "speak evil" of those in the authority positions. They "speak evil about things they nothing about" (PRIDE! vs 10), they have "gone the way of Cain" (IE 'jealous anger'), they "run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit" (cursing ((badmouthing)) the people of God for one's own advancement), those who "perished in the rebellion of Korah" (because they rebelled against the authority that God had placed over them in their lives).

They can be even simply (verse 16) "*grumblers and complainers*," ...those who are not interested in the good of the body, but instead "*walk according to their own lusts*." What they got going in their personal lives is more important than you...more important than the church and its body. They talk big ... "*mouths of great swelling words...*" and "*flattering people to gain personal advantage*." Essentially then they are liars! Verse 19 says these are folks who do not love...do not seek unity and other's best, but they "*cause divisions*."

While certainly we know and clearly see the need to contend for the faith out there in the world every day, we can miss Jude's warning about such coming in **here**...into the church community; *These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves.*(Vs 12) While this is and always has been a fact...even Jesus experienced such with the presence of Judas in the midst of the apostles, we need to remember a couple of things. One, we aren't to practice this care by being "sin sniffers." We aren't called to turn over rocks looking for grubs in the church body. God does a good job on His own in bringing these folks to light. We must continue to love them no matter the response, for that is the model of that Jesus left us. We are rather to "*build ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*" (vs 20-21)

And secondly, we are to "on some have compassion, making a distinction." (vs 22) Just because someone messes up doesn't make him or her a wolf. Some need grace and patience on our part, and a gentle nudge in the right direction. If they are fitting into this category, they will respond positively. Yet Jude says with the others...those who Jude herein describes, we are to "*save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.*" (Vs 23) Such a description can only seen as a 'throw-down.' We flinch, in saying that such seems so 'unloving.' Yet eternity is a long time, and there is nothing "loving" about doing nothing to stop them from self-destruction and certainly the destruction of others along the way. I pray that all of you are willing to burn down the house to rescue me from my own foolishness.

When we come "face-to-face" with such situations, we are indeed called to "contend." Jesus eventually told Judas "*Whatever you are going to do...do quickly.*" (Jn 13:27) "Get it on Judas...do what you need to do." God doesn't need you to bring them to their knees. Again, He does that well on His own. However, He has no time for such deceit either. Jude tells us that "*They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*" (Vs 12-13)

"Twice dead." Wow. That's serious talk, and a terribly vivid picture! Those who knew the path to life and turned back. It's a heart breaker to watch. 2 Peter 2:20-22 warns us "*For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."*

Lu 9:62 "*But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

Zephaniah 1:5-7 speaks of the false god Molech. Those who worshipped him often literally sacrificed their own children to their God. Horrid to say the least, but I have known many folks who have essentially done so. But in classic Jewish writings, the worship of Molech also encompassed the "allowing of anything other than Jehovah God to rule over the person."

"For they go up to their roofs and bow down to the sun, moon, and stars. They claim to follow the LORD, but then they worship Molech, too. And I will destroy those who used to worship me but now no longer do. They no longer ask for the LORD's guidance or seek my blessings." "
Stand in silence in the presence of the Sovereign LORD, for the awesome day of the LORD's judgment is near." Zeph 1:5-7

And what can we do in answer to such a foreboding warning? "Contend for the faith" Christian...*Push Back*. May it always be "but as for me and my house, we shall worship the Lord..." Joshua 22:13