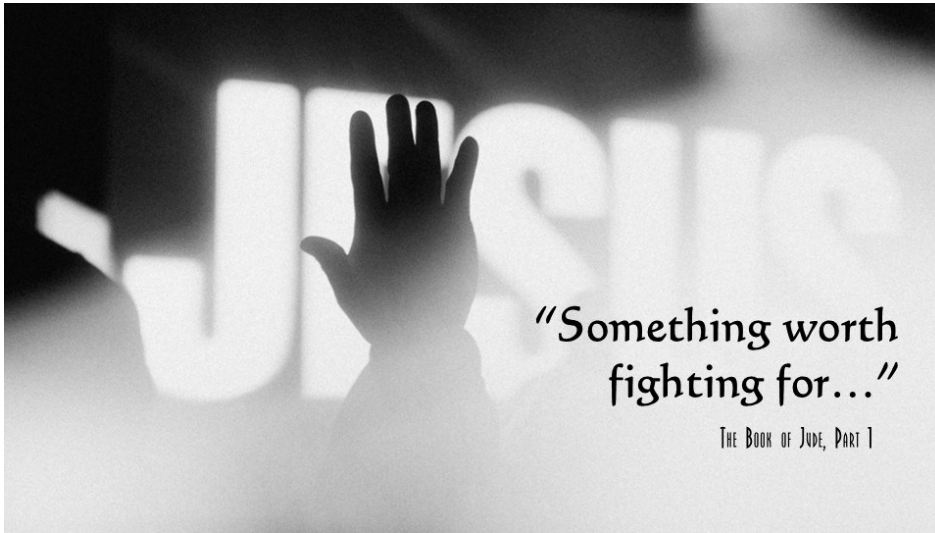




“Something worth fighting for...”

by Pastor Tim Dodson
of Jesus Fellowship of Believers
in Menomonie, Wisconsin
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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.

The author of this letter is the half-brother of Jesus himself. Indeed we have every reason to believe that through much of the life of Christ and throughout his ministry, His family were, on some level, scoffers over the idea that their brother was the living Messiah... God in flesh. In Mark 3:20–22, his family came looking for him to apparently take him back with them. They said that Jesus was “out of his mind.” Considering our own siblings, I think we can all understand that struggle! But somewhere along the way, Jesus’ brothers James and Jude were indeed converted and got on board the ministry bandwagon. It is generally understood that their conversion happened...or at least was culminated, in a post crucifixion, post resurrection time frame. Nothing like seeing someone come back from the dead to overwhelm a skeptical mind!

Jude clearly wrote this letter as a warning...an “alarm” that the apostates...the “false teachers” that had been prophesied concerning were already on the scene. Such was no longer a future expectation but rather a present reality. Other writers of the New Testament had also warned of coming apostates...false teachers and dividing elements within the church. Paul did in 2 Corinthians 11 and Romans 16. Paul was no stranger to such warnings and no stranger to making the “call to arms” toward genuine believers...for faithful followers of Christ to take a stand and do battle against the enemies of Christ and the kingdom of God.

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 the half brother of Jesus Himself, calls himself a “bond slave” to Christ. A title that is truthfully not easily worn in our day! I doubt if it ever was. While being a bond slave does not save you nor does it make Jesus

love you more than He already does, it must 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)

A "doulos"... a 'bond slave' 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 attempt to negotiate a "deal" for "his time" versus "service time." For it all belongs to the master! He has no will of his own but is completely subservient to the master. It is this singular "divide" that separates the authentic born-again believer today and the culture club church that most of America is part of.

This is the guy who writes this letter. A "doulos"... a "bond slave." 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. Jude calls them "saints." In such a light, I cannot therefore definitely say that this letter is "your mail" today. It will however clarify what such a relationship looks like so that you might honestly and faithfully know whether such describes you or not.

Jude seems to embrace the mandate of 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."*

Paul the apostle spoke concerning this "call to arms" back in his letters to Timothy. "Fight the good fight" is his famous rallying cry. He urges Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith". He speaks further concerning this call in 2 Timothy 4:7 as he reflects on his own life, stating, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith". Paul spoke also in Ephesians 6:13-17...telling Christians to put on the "armor of God" ...the truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. Such is not physical armor, but serious armor just the same. Not a physical battle but certainly warfare that has a very real possibility of taking any one of us out of the race.

Jude launches quickly into a passionate outpouring ...a call to "contend earnestly" for the faith. As in that 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 that clearly include a 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) that have found their way into the greater church and many times into the local church. How often there are situations and images that we admire and aspire to that encompass the picture of the committed athlete; the passionate outpouring, the sacrifice and the emotion! Yet rarely do the things of God move any one of us in such a manner, despite claims of devoted love and dedication! The fact is, you'll 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!

Indeed, 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* ... 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 are a technical term emanating from the law courts. They speak of the attorney for the defense "presenting a verbal defense" for his client. Such a call has profound ramifications in a world wherein many of us 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!' Again, 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) We are in a competition against the forces of evil. (1Co 9:24,25; 2Ti 2:5)

Our tendency...our 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 of course our relationship with Him. Not to mention the thousands of people lost for eternity because of our apathy and self-centeredness. So we do whatever is necessary to avoid confrontation and discomfort. We will change churches, move away, medicate, whatever will keep us out of the fray...

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! But He never softened the truth, or changed the message!

Jude remarks in his text that these corrupt elements will not remain 'out there' someplace, but will indeed...*have indeed...* "come in amongst you." They will come to church, they will involve themselves in the church, they will come forth from your family members...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 a free pass to sin. They say they are "free in Christ", but that "freedom" is not to do as we please, but rather to choose whom we will follow...ourselves or the master: to be a slave of Christ, or a slave to our own fleshly passions. Either way...we will be a "slave" to something...to someone. "Freedom" on the level that they speak is an illusion. Such does not mean we can stipulate the working conditions...the parameters of what a relationship with Christ truly is. Such folks will constantly seek the free pass...the "get-out-of-jail-free" card, and they will eventually and inevitably deny Jesus Christ. Please note the specifics of the text: Jude is not saying they will necessarily deny what Jesus has said...nor deny He is the Son of God, but they will deny HIM. They will just simply 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! For certainly 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 act 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 know 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 even simply be (verse 16) "grumblers and complainers," ...those who are not interested in the good of the body of Christ, 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!

The battles we face as true believers are real and current. It is part of walking the faith. How many of us however, are simply "AWOL?" We want all the benefits of being a child of God without any of the sweat and blood. Such is the modern "re-envisioned" version of Christianity, and it is certainly popular in our day! And why wouldn't it be? But know this: it is a lie, and will doom millions to eternal death. It is not the Bible version. It is not Christ. It is not "truth." Each of us must decide whether we will live the authentic, or whether we will try to live out the world's version...