Earnestly Contending For The Faith

Text: Jude 1:3

Introduction:

1. The epistle of Jude was written by a man who identifies himself as "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" **(Jude 1:1)**. He is generally understood to be Jude, one of the brothers of Jesus **(Matthew 13:55)**. Although related to Jesus according to the flesh, Jude humbly identifies himself as His servant.
2. Jude addressed Christians who were "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" **(Jude 1:1)**. His letter was not addressed to one particular congregation, but to believers who needed to remain faithful amid growing spiritual dangers.
3. The precise date of the epistle is uncertain. It is commonly placed somewhere between AD 60 and 80, although other dates have been suggested. Jude wrote at a time when false teachers were threatening the purity of the church.
4. Jude originally intended to write about the common salvation shared by Christians. However, the presence of dangerous religious error compelled him to urge his readers to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" **(Jude 1:3)**. This statement identifies the faith we must uphold, its finality, and our responsibility to defend it.

1. What Is The Faith? (Jude 1:3):

a. The Faith Is The Body Of Revealed Truth:

1) Jude speaks of "the faith," not merely faith in a general sense. The definite article identifies a particular body of teaching rather than the personal trust an individual places in God **(Jude 1:3)**.

2) Personal faith is our response to God and His promises. The faith, in this context, is the divine teaching upon which that trust must rest. Paul distinguished the faith he preached from the beliefs he had previously held when he referred to his former persecution of "the faith which once he destroyed" **(Galatians 1:23)**.

3) The faith includes the doctrine of Christ, the gospel of salvation, and the commandments governing Christian belief and conduct. Jesus commissioned His apostles to teach disciples to observe all things He had commanded **(Matthew 28:19–20)**.

b. The Faith Originated With God, Not Man:

1) The faith is not a religious philosophy developed through human reasoning. Paul declared that the gospel he preached was not received from man but through the revelation of Jesus Christ **(Galatians 1:11–12)**.

2) Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide His apostles into all truth **(John 16:13)**. The message they delivered therefore possessed divine authority rather than merely human authority.

3) The inspired Scriptures provide the authoritative standard by which doctrine and conduct must be judged. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and equips the man of God for every good work **(2 Timothy 3:16–17)**.

c. The Faith Is An Objective Standard Of Truth:

1) The faith does not change according to personal opinions, popular beliefs, or the customs of society. Christians are to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine rather than establish their own standards of religious teaching **(Acts 2:42)**.

2) Every doctrine must be examined against God's revealed Word. The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they heard were true **(Acts 17:11)**.

3) Religious sincerity does not make a teaching true. Paul warned that even a different gospel proclaimed by an angel from heaven must be rejected **(Galatians 1:8–9)**.

2. The Faith Was Once Delivered (Jude 1:3):

a. The Faith Was Delivered By Divine Revelation:

1) Jude describes the faith as something "delivered unto the saints." The saints did not invent the faith; they received it as a sacred trust from God **(Jude 1:3)**.

2) The apostles served as authorised messengers of Christ. Paul taught that the things he wrote were the commandments of the Lord **(1 Corinthians 14:37)**.

3) Christians therefore have no authority to alter the message entrusted to them. Paul instructed Timothy to hold fast the pattern of sound words he had received **(2 Timothy 1:13)**.

b. The Faith Was Delivered Once For All Time:

1) The Greek word translated "once" is *hapax*, which in this context conveys a decisive, once-for-all delivery. Jude does not present the faith as a message that must continually be enlarged through successive revelations **(Jude 1:3)**.

2) Jesus promised His apostles that the Spirit of truth would guide them into all truth **(John 16:13)**. The apostolic revelation was intended to provide the truth necessary for the church.

3) Peter declared that God's divine power had given Christians all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ **(2 Peter 1:3)**. God's people are not left waiting for additional doctrines to complete the faith.

c. The Faith Must Neither Be Added To Nor Taken Away From:

1) Because the faith has been delivered, Christians must preserve the teaching rather than attempt to improve upon it. Paul instructed Timothy to guard what had been committed to his trust **(1 Timothy 6:20)**.

2) John warned that whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God **(2 John 1:9)**. Departing from that doctrine is not spiritual progress but unfaithfulness.

3) The prohibition against adding to or taking away from God's revealed Word is a principle repeatedly emphasised in Scripture **(Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5–6; Revelation 22:18–19)**. Christians must respect the boundaries of divine revelation.

3. Earnestly Contending For The Faith (Jude 1:3):

a. What Does It Mean To Contend For The Faith?:

1) To contend means to struggle, strive, or fight for something. Jude calls Christians to defend the truth against those who would corrupt or abandon it **(Jude 1:3)**.

2) The immediate context explains the urgency of this command. Certain ungodly men had entered among the believers, turning God's grace into an excuse for immoral conduct and denying the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ **(Jude 1:4)**.

3) Contending for the faith involves teaching sound doctrine and exposing error. Elders, in particular, must be able both to exhort by sound doctrine and to convince those who contradict it **(Titus 1:9)**.

b. What Does It Mean To Contend Earnestly?:

1) The expression "earnestly contend" translates the Greek word *epagōnizomai*, which conveys the idea of strenuous effort or determined struggle. Jude calls for more than a casual or occasional concern for the truth **(Jude 1:3)**.

2) Defending the faith requires courage and perseverance. Paul instructed Timothy to preach the Word, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine, even when people would no longer endure sound teaching **(2 Timothy 4:2–4)**.

3) Christians must remain steadfast when the truth is unpopular or opposed. Paul urged believers to stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel **(Philippians 1:27)**.

c. How Should Christians Contend For The Faith?:

1) Christians must first know the truth they are called to defend. They are commanded to study diligently so that they can handle the Word of truth correctly **(2 Timothy 2:15)**.

2) The defence of the faith must be conducted with the right spirit. Christians should be ready to give an answer for their hope with meekness and fear **(1 Peter 3:15)**. The servant of the Lord must not strive in a quarrelsome manner but must patiently instruct those who oppose the truth **(2 Timothy 2:24–25)**.

3) Contending for the faith also requires personal faithfulness. A Christian who defends sound doctrine while refusing to practise it undermines the very truth he claims to uphold. Paul instructed Timothy to take heed both to himself and to the doctrine **(1 Timothy 4:16)**.

4) The ultimate purpose is not to win arguments or establish personal superiority but to uphold God's truth and help others escape error. Jude urged his readers to show compassion toward some and to save others with fear, pulling them out of the fire **(Jude 1:22–23)**.

Conclusion:

1. The faith is the complete body of divinely revealed teaching entrusted to God's people. It is an objective standard of truth, not a collection of personal opinions or changing religious traditions **(Jude 1:3; Galatians 1:23)**.
2. The faith was delivered once for all time. Christians are not authorised to supplement it with new doctrines or replace it with teachings of human origin **(Jude 1:3; Galatians 1:8–9)**.
3. Every Christian has a responsibility to uphold and defend the faith. This requires knowledge, courage, perseverance, and a willingness to confront error **(Jude 1:3; Philippians 1:27)**.
4. Our defence of the faith must always be accompanied by humility, patience, and personal obedience. We honour the truth not merely by what we say about it but by how faithfully we live according to it **(1 Peter 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:16)**.

Applications:

1. We must make certain that our religious beliefs are based upon the faith revealed in Scripture rather than upon inherited traditions, personal preferences, or popular opinions **(Acts 17:11)**.
2. We must reject the idea that new religious revelations are needed to complete God's message. Our responsibility is to learn, believe, and obey the truth already delivered **(Jude 1:3; 2 Peter 1:3)**.
3. We must develop sufficient knowledge of Scripture to recognise false teaching and explain why it is wrong. A willingness to defend the faith is of little value without an understanding of what the faith teaches **(2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9)**.
4. We must defend the faith courageously but without arrogance or bitterness. The truth must be upheld firmly, while those who are mistaken should be treated with patience and a sincere desire for their salvation **(2 Timothy 2:24–25; Jude 1:22–23)**.

Questions:

1. Who was Jude, and how did he identify himself at the beginning of his epistle **(Jude 1:1; Matthew 13:55)**?
2. What prompted Jude to urge Christians to contend for the faith **(Jude 1:3–4)**?
3. What is meant by “the faith” in Jude's exhortation **(Jude 1:3; Galatians 1:23)**?
4. Why is it important to recognise that the faith originated with God rather than man **(Galatians 1:11–12)**?
5. What is the significance of the word “once” in Jude's description of the faith **(Jude 1:3)**?
6. How do the promises of Jesus and Peter support the completeness of God's revealed truth **(John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:3)**?
7. Why must Christians reject teachings that contradict the revealed gospel **(Galatians 1:8–9)**?

8. What does it mean to contend earnestly for the faith **(Jude 1:3; Philippians 1:27)**?

9. What qualities should characterise a Christian's defence of the faith **(1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:24–25)**?

10. Why must personal conduct accompany the defence of sound doctrine **(1 Timothy 4:16)**?

Summary:

Jude's exhortation to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" establishes three essential truths. First, the faith is the objective body of divine teaching revealed through Christ and His apostles. Second, this faith was delivered once for all time and must neither be supplemented by human doctrines nor altered to suit changing opinions. Third, Christians are responsible for defending it with knowledge, courage, perseverance, and the proper spirit. The church's calling is not to invent a new faith or modify the original, but to remain faithful to the truth God has already revealed **(Jude 1:3)**.

Questions & Answers:

1. Who was Jude, and how did he identify himself at the beginning of his epistle **(Jude 1:1; Matthew 13:55)**?

Answer: Jude is generally understood to have been one of the brothers of Jesus. He identified himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James.

2. What prompted Jude to urge Christians to contend for the faith **(Jude 1:3–4)**?

Answer: False teachers had entered among the believers, corrupting God's grace and denying the authority of Jesus Christ. Jude recognised the urgent need to defend the truth.

3. What is meant by "the faith" in Jude's exhortation **(Jude 1:3; Galatians 1:23)**?

Answer: The faith is the objective body of divinely revealed teaching that Christians are commanded to believe, obey, and uphold, rather than an individual's personal trust in God.

4. Why is it important to recognise that the faith originated with God rather than man **(Galatians 1:11–12)**?

Answer: Because its authority comes from divine revelation, Christians must submit to its teaching rather than change it to accommodate human opinions.

5. What is the significance of the word "once" in Jude's description of the faith **(Jude 1:3)**?

Answer: It indicates that the faith was delivered decisively, once for all time, rather than being subject to continual additions through new doctrinal revelations.

6. How do the promises of Jesus and Peter support the completeness of God's revealed truth **(John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:3)**?

Answer: Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, while Peter declared that God had provided all things pertaining to life and godliness.

7. Why must Christians reject teachings that contradict the revealed gospel **(Galatians 1:8–9)**?

Answer: Because the gospel possesses divine authority, and no person, regardless of position or claimed spiritual authority, has the right to proclaim a different message.

8. What does it mean to contend earnestly for the faith **(Jude 1:3; Philippians 1:27)**?

Answer: It means to strive diligently and courageously to uphold and defend the truth against error, remaining steadfast even when opposition arises.

9. What qualities should characterise a Christian's defence of the faith **(1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:24–25)**?

Answer: A Christian should defend the truth with conviction, meekness, reverence, patience, and a sincere desire to help those who are mistaken.

10. Why must personal conduct accompany the defence of sound doctrine **(1 Timothy 4:16)**?

Answer: Because Christians must remain faithful both in their teaching and in their lives. Defending the truth while disobeying it contradicts the message they seek to uphold.