

## **4 - Strategies for Contending for the Faith** **Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 11/6/22**

This is week 4 of our study in the Jude called Contending For the Faith. Jude wrote his letter to bless us and to warn us. Verse three says:

*I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*

Like us, the early church faced threats from inside and outside the church and they had to struggle to live out their faith in a manner consistent with the truth. In order for us to contend for the faith, we must understand what we are fighting against and how to respond to those who attack the basic doctrines and teachings of the Christian faith.

I'm preaching today on Strategies for Contending for the Faith. Jude taught us the first step in contending for the faith in verses 5-16. And that step is to beware of false teachers. He showed us their errors so we can recognize them when we see them.

Beginning in verse 17, Jude begins to give us other strategies for contending for the faith. The first strategy we use to contend for the faith is the Word of God.

*Dear friends, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We must remember the Word! We must remember the prophecies about the last times. None of the things Jude writes about are a surprise to God! In fact, He warned us this would happen centuries ago! God is never caught off guard and neither should we be because we have the prophetic words of the apostles and of Jesus Christ.

Do you know the biggest problem concerning contending for the faith? Remember – that's talking about the body of truth – the doctrine – that was once for all delivered to us. The big problem is that most Christians either do not know that truth or they do not believe that truth or they do not obey that truth.

Every person has a worldview—defined as the belief system by which you view the world and your life in it. Your worldview drives the decisions you make and the actions you take. A biblical worldview begins with the belief that absolutes exist and a belief that the Bible defines them.

Many Americans believe they have a “biblical worldview,” but very few actually do. I showed you some shocking research a few weeks ago that revealed that less than half of American pastors have a biblical world view. You think that's bad?

What percentage of Americans who call themselves Christians have a biblical worldview? 9%

Today, 176 million Americans claim to be Christians—that’s 69% of the population. Yet, only 6% of U.S. adults—which is 9% of those identifying as Christians—possess a biblical worldview. That’s according to a study by researcher George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University.

Barna said, “Two out of three Americans think of themselves as a Christian, and a majority still think that Christianity is kind of about the Bible, but there’s a big gap between what (self-identified Christians) believe the Bible may teach, and what the Bible actually teaches.”

For instance, 61% of those who self-identify as Christians affirm that: I believe that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect and just Creator of the universe who still rules the universe today. That’s great, but a large majority of self-identified Christians also report many beliefs “not in harmony with biblical teaching.” These include:

72% argue that people are basically good

66% say that ‘having faith’ matters more than which faith you pursue

64% say that all religious faiths are of equal value

58% believe that if a person is good enough, or does enough good things, they can earn their way into Heaven

57% believe in karma

Not surprisingly, the research found that adults without a biblical worldview and those with such a worldview had vastly different views of immoral and unethical behavior. For instance, those without a biblical worldview were:

Around 100 times more likely to endorse abortion

Around 80 times more likely to say pornography is morally acceptable

31 times more likely to believe living together before marriage is morally acceptable

15 times more likely to believe homosexual sex is acceptable

18 times more likely to endorse drunkenness

12 times more likely to accept profanity

11 times more likely to say adultery is OK

Listen to Barna’s conclusion - “The primary reason that people do not act like Jesus is because they do not think like Jesus. Behavior stems from what we think — our attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions.”

Contending for the faith requires know what that faith is and knowing what that faith is requires knowing the doctrines of the Bible. That’s why we work hard to teach you every week. That’s why we have small groups on Wednesday night

discussing the sermons and reinforcing biblical truth. We must have faith before we can contend for the faith. We must know truth before we can defend the truth.

Satan knows this and he's been very successful at deceiving many Christians and blinding them to truth. And it's only the light of God's word and the power of the Holy Spirit that can open your eyes and lead you into truth. The first mention of Satan in the Bible is found in Genesis 3:1

*Now the serpent was more subtle and crafty than any living creature of the field which the Lord God had made. And he (Satan) said to the woman, Can it really be that God has said, "You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?"*

We see here what Satan attacks – God's word. He wants to keep you out of God's word – but if he can't do that – he will twist God's word to make you believe something that is not true.

We need to be so familiar with the truth that we easily recognize lies! We need to be so familiar with the voice of God that we recognize the counterfeit voice of the enemy. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 – the Bible talks about men who are –

*...false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*

There is not one kind of spiritual experience or ministry position that Satan will not try to counterfeit. He tries to counterfeit everything from salvation to the gifts of the spirit.

Back in the old days before they had pens that could detect counterfeit money – they had to train bank tellers to detect it. You would think they would sit them down in a classroom and give a lecture on how to detect counterfeit money. And there was some of that. But the problem was that counterfeiters were constantly coming up with new ways to deceive people.

So the main way they trained bank tellers was to have them count piles and piles of real money. They would spend days handling real money so that whenever they came across a fake, they would immediately recognize it. They were so used to the real that the false was obvious to them.

The Bible tells us to do the same thing! We should be so familiar with God's truth that a lie seems obvious. Romans 16:19 says:

*I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

When you are familiar with good, evil is obvious.  
When you are familiar with right, wrong is obvious.

When you are familiar with truth, error is obvious.  
 When you are familiar with the real, the counterfeit is obvious.

By the way – I am very concerned about a generation coming up now that believes that the Bible is outdated and irrelevant to current times. Yes – the Bible is an ancient book – but it was written by an eternal God. That means God is outside of time and He knows the end from the beginning. So when God inspired people to write the Bible – He did so from an eternal perspective. That means that God was very aware of the times we are living in now! And the book He wrote applies to all people in all places at all times! It is the unchanging revelation of an eternal God!

Yet – today many people are rejecting God’s voice and that makes them susceptible to Satan’s counterfeits. It’s amazing the things some Christians put their trust in – things like - Psychics / Fortune telling / tarot cards / palm readers / horoscope. This is so opposite of what God wants! When you come to Jesus – you change kingdoms from darkness to light. Colossians 1:13 says:

*He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us Into the kingdom of the Son He loves.*

God saved us out of darkness and He wants us to have nothing to do with darkness. Ephesians 5:11 says:

*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

God wants us to expose the darkness in order to save people. Acts 26:18 says:

*I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.*

Satan’s goal is to extinguish the light of God – but when we walk in the light as God is in the light – the darkness can never extinguish the light!

One of the main ways we walk in the light is walking in the truth of God’s word. Psalm 119:104-105 says

*Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

We overcome darkness by walking in the light of God’s Word. That’s how we contend for the faith. And we must take a stand inside and outside the church. Outside we can contend for the faith by:  
 Voting biblically – abortion, religious liberty, sexual identity issues  
 Getting involved in things like school board meetings

We must also take a stand inside the church against false teachers. And specifically, we must remember the prophecies in the Bible. Jude 18 says:

*They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires."*

The word scoffers means mockers and false teachers who despise Christianity, the Word of God and the church. Not only do they despise those things, but they ridicule them, make fun of them, and put them down. Here's the words from the apostles we must remember. Paul warned the believers in Acts 20:29-30

*I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!*

2 Peter 3:3 says: *You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

Jesus said this about the end times in Matthew 24:10-13

*At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

2 Peter 2:1-3 says: *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. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.*

And this will not get any better! 2 Timothy 3:13-14 says:

*Evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.*

1 Timothy 4:1-2 says: *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

2 Timothy 4:3-4 says: *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

Brothers and sisters – that time has come! To contend for the faith, we must develop spiritual discernment. We must be able to tell the difference between true and false teachings. There are reasons why people are unable to do this.

- 1- The replacement of absolute truth with moral relativism
- 2- A widespread lack of spiritual maturity in churches
- 3- The failure to study and properly interpret the Scripture
- 4- A decreased focus on doctrine and its importance

Doctrine in its simplest definition means, “something that is taught.” Doctrine is composed of the principles that we believe to be truth based on the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

To contend for the faith we must pay close attention to doctrine. 1 Timothy 4:16 says:

*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

If we don't get grounded in sound doctrine, we will be susceptible to false doctrine and deception. Since doctrine is so important, we want to be sure to teach the important truths and principles in the Bible. Failing to do this causes people to be easily deceived by false teachers.

Jude said that these teachers are following their own ungodly desires. Ungodly means a lack of reverence towards God that causes you to act in sinful ways. Jude goes on to say in verse 19

*These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.*

Jude took one last swipe at the false teachers, pointing out how they cause divisions among believers. Why? Because they follow ungodly desires and their natural instincts and they lack the Holy Spirit in their lives. The absence of the Holy Spirit always results in ungodly living.

And false teachers don't have to be overtly evil. They can be just following their natural instincts. Beware of the natural man. The natural man is opposed to the spiritual man. 1 Corinthians 2:11-16 says:

*No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in*

*words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

Here Paul compares the natural man with the spiritual man. The natural man – psuchikos – is led by the psyche – the soul. Thayer’s Greek Dictionary says the psyche is the source of feelings, desires, affections. We usually say it’s the mind, will and emotions. The natural man is governed by his own soul – his own thinking, his own feelings, his own will.

Paul contrasts that with the spiritual man - pneumatikos – those who belong to and have the characteristics of the Holy Spirit - those who are governed by God and the word of God – whose minds are renewed by the Spirit, whose feelings and will are submitted to the Lordship of Christ.

Jude tells us that these false teachers following their own desires cause division in the church. The Greek word translated “divide” here literally refers to making distinctions between people. Apparently, the false teachers were elitists who claimed to be more spiritual than others because of their supposed greater insights about the truth. But Jude said, in reality, they were merely following “natural instincts” and lacked the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Jude gives us a strategy here to contend for the faith by remembering the word. And the only way you can remember the word is to have the word in you. When you have God’s strategy – you will overcome the enemy. That’s why the Word of God gives us advance knowledge of the enemy's plans - so we are not ignorant of his devices, plans and schemes.

The bloodiest day of the Civil War was the Battle of Antietam in 1862 which lasted for 12 hours and resulted in 23,000 men killed or wounded. Though militarily a draw, the mediocre Union General George McClellan was able to end the brilliant Robert E. Lee's attack in Maryland, forcing him to retreat across the Potomac. How was this possible? A Union soldier had found a copy of Lee's battle plans and had delivered them to McClellan before the engagement. By knowing his enemy’s plans in advance, a mediocre General was victorious.

In some respects, we are no match for our adversary, Satan, whose wiles we are told to be wary of. But as with General McClellan, our enemy's plans have fallen into our hands. We know his usual devices and strategies. With such knowledge, given to us by God's Word and God's Spirit within, we too can resist the enemy's advances.

So when you hear the false teaching that grace is license to sin – you remember the word that grace teaches us to say no to sin and grace is the power to resist sin.

When you hear the false teaching that there are many ways to God and salvation – you remember the word that Jesus is the way, the truth, the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

When you hear the false teaching that everyone has their own truth and it doesn't matter what you believe – you remember that God's word is truth, Jesus is truth, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth and any belief opposed to God and His Word is not the truth at all.

So we can contend for the faith with confidence because we remember the Word of God, we believe the Word of God, we obey the Word of God, and we speak the Word of God in faith!

When we do that – we overcome the enemy as we contend for the faith!