

**5 – Build Your Faith to Contend for the Faith**  
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This is week 5 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.*

We've preached on what contending means, on the character and characteristics of false teachers, and last week we taught 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.

Then in verse 17, Jude gives us another strategy for contending for the faith. Last week I taught on that strategy - which is the Word of God.

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

We must remember the Word in order to overcome with the Word!

I also gave a lot of detail about how few Christians have a biblical world view. In order for us to contend for the faith we must know the word, remember the word, believe the word, pray the word, obey the word and do spiritual warfare with the word.

In verses 20- 23, Jude gives us more strategies on contending for the faith. I'm preaching on that in a sermon called Build Your Faith to Contend for the Faith. Verse 20 says:

*But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.*

In these three short verses, Jude gives us seven powerful strategies to contend for the faith.

### **1- Build your Faith**

When we become believers in Christ, we have a measure of faith. But that faith should grow. Romans 1 talks about growing from faith to faith. Notice that you are responsible to build your faith. That means that we cannot wait for spiritual growth to just happen, or expect others to make us grow. No one can make your grow in faith – even those in the church. We can provide an environment conducive to growth, but we cannot make you grow.

How do we build our faith? We must build our faith on the solid rock of Jesus Christ and His teachings found in the Bible. We cannot build on the shifting sands of our own opinions or other people's opinions. That will only result in us falling apart rather than being built up.

We can never allow our desire to be relevant to the world to mislead us into adopting the ways of the world. You cannot reach the world with the ways of the world! You reach the world with the truth of God's word!

The truths of God's word is always relevant – even if they are unpopular! People are saved through the foolishness of preaching the word! It's foolish to them, but it's the wisdom and God and the power of God! I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to them that believe, to the Jew first and also the Gentile! We must build up our trust in God and our knowledge of His word. Romans 10:17 says:

*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Notice, it does not say faith comes by hearing the word of God. It says faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God. When you spend time with God in His word, He will speak to you and when God speaks to you, it will build your faith. Without faith you will never attempt anything big for God. Without faith you cannot even please God. Without faith you will not operate in the supernatural power of God. In Acts 20:32, Paul said:

*I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

We see here three things that build us up: God builds us up - His word builds us up - His grace builds us up. And notice Paul was involved in this process of building others up. We, too should be involved in building each other up. Everyone needs building up and everyone needs to build others up.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says:

*Encourage one another and build each other up.*

But, in order to build others up, we must first build ourselves up!  
Colossians 2:6-7 says:

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

You build yourself up in the faith when you continue to live in Christ – When you continue in the teachings of His word – When you continue in thanksgiving, praise and worship.

Ephesians 4 says the 5-fold ministry builds our faith. 1 Corinthians 14 says the gifts of the Spirit build us up. That brings us to the second part of that verse:

## **2- Pray in the Spirit**

There are several meanings to praying in the Spirit. It can mean to pray Spirit-led prayers. But Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:14-15

*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding.*

Paul tells us that praying in the Spirit is praying in tongues. This is not the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues in church. This is the tongues – which many call a prayer language – that you receive when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Every single one of the disciples spoke in tongues. Everyone who wrote a book of the New Testament spoke in tongues. This is not something weird – it is the normal Christian life! Praying in the spirit – which is praying in tongues – builds up your faith! When we pray with our understanding, we are limited by our understanding. But when we pray in the spirit – there are no limits!

I don't know about you, but there are times in my life when I just don't know how to pray or what to pray. There are situations beyond my ability to understand! What do I do in those times? I pray in the Spirit. Thank God for that gift where you can pray knowing that the perfect will of God is being prayed and the power of God is released. It is faith building at those times say, "God – I don't know how to pray in this situation – pray your will through me" – and then begin to pray in the spirit. Romans 8:26-27 says:

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

When we pray in the spirit it builds our faith because we have the confidence that the Holy Spirit is praying the perfect will of God through us. This verse is not about tongues, but it shows us a principle that when we pray in the spirit, our born-again spirit is united with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit prays the perfect will of God through us. What can be more powerful than the Holy Spirit interceding for you?

Praying in the Spirit is not gibberish, it's not meaningless, it is not emotionalism and it is not a less important gift of the Spirit. This prayer language is not a learned language. In fact, the mind does not understand what is being prayed. So, the meaning of what we are praying is unknown to us, but it is not unknown to God.

I'll never forget when I saw a report on ABC's Nightline about what researchers at the University of Pennsylvania discovered when they did a study on what happens in people's brains when they speak in tongues. The frontal lobes of our brains show increased activity when we are focused on what we are saying. So, the researchers took images of people's brains during various kinds of spiritual activities – like praying, worshipping and meditating.

The researchers discovered that when people sang or prayed, there was increased activity in the frontal lobes of the brain. However, when they scanned the brains of those speaking in tongues – there was less frontal lobe activity – which confirms that the words spoken while praying in the spirit come from a source other than the mind of the person speaking in tongues. Science proves what the Bible said 2,000 years ago – when you pray in the spirit, your mind is unfruitful – or literally – barren. But the Holy Spirit is praying the perfect will of God through you! That builds your faith! That brings us to verse Jude 21

*Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

### **3- Keep Yourself in God's Love**

Jude is not saying to keep God loving you. There's nothing you can do to make God love you. He loves you no matter what. But we don't always believe that. Remember, we're talking about building our faith. One of the ways we do that is by learning to trust that God loves us no matter what. We need to keep ourselves in the awareness of God's love! Jesus said in John 15:9-12

*"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."*

There are blessings that come from abiding in the love of Christ. One of them is to have complete joy.

Because God loves us, He wants to bless us. But it is possible for us to get out of the place of God's blessing. So when we get into sin or unbelief, it doesn't cause God to say, "I don't love you anymore." God loves you still, but you are now out of fellowship with Him and that hinders the release of His blessing in your life.

The prodigal son is a great illustration of this. His father always loved him – but the son took himself out of fellowship with his father and as a result he lost his father's blessings. He did not keep himself in the love of his father.

Jude is warning us not to do the same thing. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

#### 4- Wait for God's Mercy

This phrase wait for the mercy of God is a traditional way of saying, "Wait for the return of Jesus Christ." We build our faith – not by focusing on how bad things are or on how evil keeps getting worse. We build our faith by believing in and looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Titus 2:12-15 says:

*Grace teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority.*

James now shows us how to contend for the faith with three types of people who have fallen for the deceptions of false teachers. Jude 22-23 says:

*Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear-hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

You cannot witness to everybody the exact same way. Jesus didn't. People are different and they respond to different approaches. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 tells us:

*Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

There's a difference between lazy people, timid people and weak people. And we need to patiently minister to them accordingly.

It might be easier to think of a physical example. Think about a person who injured their leg and they working to rehab their weak leg. You don't admonish them for their disability. You don't call them lazy and tell them to start running. NO! You support them – you help them get around and you encourage them to press through the pain of rehab.

But if someone is healthy but lazy – you need to admonish them to get up and get busy. If someone is capable but lacking in courage – they need encouragement to step out in faith. Do you get the picture? There are times when lovingly warning or correcting someone is appropriate. When you do, do it according to Ephesians 4:15 - *Speak the truth in love.*

How you say something is as important as what you say! You need voices encouraging you to keep on keeping on! And you need voices warning you when you get off track!

Over the years, I've had to tell some people some hard things. I always try to do it in love.

I've had to tell people who were going to leave their spouse for someone else - "You know I love you, but what you are doing is not good! This may feel good to you right now - but the consequences will not be good! It won't be good for you. It won't be good for your children. If you think good results will come from this - you are dead wrong. Please don't do this!"

Sometimes they listen and sometimes they don't. Sometimes they even get offended. I'm telling you in love today - if you don't have people who can speak into your life when you get off track - you will have a tough time in life.

And if you get offended whenever someone speaks the truth in love to you - you will spend your life in anger and bitterness and the enemy will always have a hook in your jaw!

### **5- Show Mercy to Doubters**

There are some who are waffling between faith and unbelief - between truth and deception. They don't know what to believe. We need to share the truth with them as we contend for the faith. But we must do it in a merciful, compassionate way. We must speak the truth in love.

We must contend for the faith without being contentious, without condemnation, without demonizing them, and without acting superior to them. These people are genuinely confused and uncertain about what to believe. We must be patient with them, listen to them, and gently guide them back to truth and sound doctrine.

### **6- Share Your Faith with the Lost**

The second group Jude mentions are further down the path of apostasy. They believe the false teaching hook, line and sinker. Jude says we must deal strongly with them by snatching them from the fire. We must still speak the truth in love, but we must aggressively and urgently contend for the faith with them.

When I think of snatching from the fire, I'm reminded of when my children were young. It's hard to teach them what hot is without them experiencing heat. But we can't allow them to stick their hand in a fire. We must literally snatch their hand away if they try to touch fire.

It's the same thing with deceived people. They are headed toward the fire of eternal judgment and don't know it. We must care enough to contend for the faith on their behalf.

### **7- Hate the Sin but Love the Sinner**

The third group are the false teachers themselves. We must be merciful to them as well as we contend for the faith. But we must also be extremely cautious so that we don't fall into their deception.

We must build our faith in order to contend for the faith. We must be standing on a firm foundation before we can throw a lifeline to someone who is being swept away.

Jude said to hate even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. Sin stains and corrupts people. But we do not hate the sinner - we hate the sin.

I want to close by saying that sharing your faith builds your faith!  
Philemon 6-7 says:

*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.*

Notice that the second part of this verse is a direct result of the first: When you share your faith – then you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

In other words - Not sharing your faith stunts your spiritual growth.  
Sharing your faith leads to a full understanding of spiritual blessings.

Sharing our faith accelerates our growth. There is a level of the Christian life that only happens when we are actively engaged in sharing our faith.

Could it be that there are things you do not understand simply because you are not sharing?

Could it be that there is some blessing you are missing because you are not keeping yourself in the love of God?

Could it be that your faith is weak because you're not praying in the Spirit?

Could it be that you are not contending for the faith because you are not feeding yourself God's Word?

If we are going to contend for the faith, we must first have faith and then we must build our faith.

That requires the Word of God and the Spirit of God – Spirit and truth!

Today we want to invite you to obey the command of God to be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive the gift of praying in the Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost Peter said that this is for all those who are afar off – as many as our Lord will call. That includes you! So ask God to fill you with His Spirit today!