

PP Jude: Becoming a Contender

Part 13-Jude 20-21

1/25-26, 2014

PP Illus Listen to this old poem, source unknown: *Where our Captain bids us go, 'Tis not ours to murmur no; He that gives the sword and shield, Chooses too the battlefield, Where we are to fight the foe.*

There is a battlefield to which we are called to fight as Christians
 Jude has called us to contend for the faith, and he has taught us how to become contenders
 Our faith is under serious, and vicious attack, from within as well as outside the church
 And Jude has become our coach, drilling into us the fundamentals of the game
 The first instruction was for us to

PP 1-Look back...remember...'must remember...the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 17

Don't forget...keep your eyes open, don't be caught off guard or flat-footed
 Remember together, stay together as a team, for a divided team will never win the fight
 Now, in verses 20-21, Jude moves to the next set of instructions, where we are to:

PP 2-Look in...remain

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life." Jude 1:20-21

4 commands instructions that are actually commands

If we are to be strong enough to stand against the enemy and advance the gospel against these enemies, then we need to learn to *build, pray, keep and hope*

PP a) Build

"But you, beloved," 20

Remember with the word *'beloved'*, Jude speaks to the church, not the individual
 The *'beloved'* are those who are located in the love of God, powerfully and permanently
 But in the early church, the word *'beloved'* had a quiet allusion to suffering and anguish
 It was the word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, where God told Abraham:

PP *"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love [beloved], and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."* Genesis 22:2

'Beloved' communicated a deep concern and love for those about to, or are presently, suffering
 In fact God the Father called Jesus *'beloved'* at His baptism, just He suffered in the wilderness
 Later, God called Jesus *'beloved'* again, as Jesus turned toward Jerusalem and death
 The word is rarely used today and when we do, it is often ironically, in funerals and obituaries
 Jude's readers are suffering from outside by the Romans, and on the inside by false teachers
 Neither Abraham, nor Jesus, not even Isaac, shrunk back in the face of suffering, and neither can we, the beloved fall away in fear

Instead, “...*building yourselves up in your most holy faith*” **Jude 1:20**

Friends, this functions in the Greek language as a command, but note especially the word ‘*faith*’

PP It is the trust that we place in the entire body of beliefs, made clear in God’s Holy Word and taught by the Apostles

Subjective faith goes like this: “*I have faith that my God will provide for my needs.*”

PP Objective faith is this: “**God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**” **Philippians 4:19**

Subjective faith depends on the objective truth to grow

It is the same as what we saw in verse 3, except there it was ‘*the faith*’, not ‘*your faith*’

‘*Your faith*’ carries with it the responsibility that every Christian has to grow up into that which we believe, that is the gospel message of God’s redeeming work in humanity

The difference between ‘*the*’ and ‘*your*’ is like the difference between caring for a house you rent, and a house you own

Build up, grow stronger in ‘*Your faith*’, which is holy, unchangeable and must not be changed

PP “*For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*” **2 Peter 1:5-7**

But if you want your faith to grow stronger, then we must exercise it, build on it

PP “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*” **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

We all should exercise, right?

PP Paul told Timothy, “*train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*” **1 Timothy 4:7-8**

There is *some value* in physical training, but make sure you keep it in perspective, because there is eternal value in spiritual training

So study the Word of God, know God more deeply, and exercise that knowledge in good works

The result is discernment!

You’ll see error when it is right in front of you

You’ll recoil from false teaching, your spirit will bear witness to it, because you have been building up your faith, your knowledge and love of God

A faith being built up will have the strength of conviction and courage to confront false teaching

When I skip just 1-2 weeks of exercise, I lose strength so quickly it feels like starting over

The same loss of strength occurs in our faith when we stop being intentional in exercising it

Which is why Jude uses a Greek tense for ‘*building yourselves up*’ that means action that must be continuous without stopping

You stop, the muscle of your faith weakens and you lose the ability and strength to fight for the faith

Friends, build yourself up in the Christian faith
 Study God's Word: *know it, love it, test it, live it, teach it to others*
 The members of the Chinese church used to have a saying, "No Bible—no breakfast!"

PP b) Pray

Jude says to exercise our faith, but to also to be *'praying in the Holy Spirit'*

If all we do is read and study the Bible, we will have a great deal of knowledge, but not much power

If we concentrate on prayer and ignore the Bible, we may be guilty of zeal without knowledge. Prayer and the study of God's Word go together and make a Christian a formidable force in the world

The Word of God begins to change our thinking, renewing our minds, helping us to know, and to agree with God's will

PP *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."*

Philippians 2:13-14

Do you see here the prior working of the Spirit in our hearts, bringing about in us new desires, fresh effort, and a constant resolve and willingness to live as God wants us to?

Even more, praying in the Spirit moves the Spirit to work in us, changing our desire adjusting our perspective, stirring His will in our will

Parents, think of it this way...would you rather your child obey you out of fear of the consequences, or from a heart that wants to do what you say?

Studying and loving God's Word and praying in the Spirit create changes in our desires, so that we want what God wants, love what He loves, and hate what He hates

PP Prayer must be in alignment with His will, or as James wrote, *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."* **James 4:3**

To pray in the Spirit is to pray consistent with God's will, trusting Him to help *"us in our*

PP *weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."* **Romans 8:26**

Jude just told us these false teachers were devoid of the Spirit, and in contrast, we in Christ, have the living Spirit of God inside us!

How amazing that truth is!

And He, the Spirit, knows the mind of God, and He begins to reveal that to us through the Word. Praying in the Spirit means you pray to know God's mind before you insist on telling God about your mind

PP c) Keep

So far, Jude our trainer has taught us to build up our faith, pray in the Spirit, and now third, *"keep yourselves in the love of God"*

PP He learned it from the words of Jesus his brother, *'As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.'* **John 15:9**

In other words, *You are the beloved, now live in that love!*

But what does it mean to *'keep yourselves in the love of God.'*?

It doesn't mean to keep yourself saved, for Jude had already written in verse 1 that we are being kept for Jesus Christ, and he is about to expand on our *keeping Savior* in verse 24

Let me illustrate in two ways what it means to *'keep yourselves in the love of God'*

I will often see a mother in our church have her little toddler walking beside her, and I'll sometimes bend down to say hello to that child only to have him clutch his mother's legs and hide behind them

Jude is saying, stay close to God, naturally and instinctively move stay under His protective care and fatherly love

Perhaps another way to understand what this means is by observing what my dog Rusty does when we take him in the woods on walks

It used to be that we would never let him off his leash as he would run away chasing every scent or sight he found, and we would fear he would never return

Now, he has matured through our discipline, having become obedient, to the point where I don't need the leash, he goes where I go, and stops when I stop

Jude is saying here to stay in the sphere of God's love, keep in the place of His blessing

PP And Jesus taught us how to keep in His Father's love, *"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."* **John 15:10**

It is not a life that seeks to do the right thing in order for God to love us, but understands more deeply what He has done for us, and desires to do the right things

It is an inside out process...be in God's Word, pray in the Spirit, love to be obedient to God and know the rich power of His love.

Friends, this is the way grace works, and many Christians need to relearn this!

Grace sets us free from our own selfish desires, freeing us, teaching us to love and serve God!

PP *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"* **Titus 2:11-13**

I sometimes will explain to rebellious teens, that the authority of parents acts like a shield behind which there is safety from our enemies of the world, flesh and devil

But if they choose to defy their parents' authority, they are leaving that protection, exposing themselves to the very enemies that are trying to destroy them

The same goes for us: if we stray from the love of God, wander away from His legs, so to speak, disobedient and rebellious, we leave the protection He has given us

Build up ourselves in the faith, pray in the Spirit, stay in His love, and finally, be *‘waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.’*

PP d) Hope

This may be the hardest of the four as it is difficult to wait, especially when we are suffering
Yet God's promises are not "if", but "when"

It is an attitude of confidence that the Lord will return so remember that the troubles of this life
are short compared to eternity

PP So now, Jude says, be *‘waiting’*, a word that means *earnestly expecting!*

Earnest expectation goes by another name, hope, and I want to offer you a definition of that word

PP *Hope is faith in your future, based on God's faithfulness in your past*

And we will see in the doxology that Jude writes, it is based on a confidence of God's power and
character

Anxiety, by the way, is its opposite: fear in your future, built on the perception that God has not
been faithful in your past

Hope is the attitude that says, *I can make it through this, I can endure to the end, because my
God has never been unfaithful to me, His promises are sure!*

Hope works in us like the manager in the corner of the ring yelling out that there is 30 seconds to
go in the round so don't quit, it's almost over!

It works like the sign that says to the marathoner that you only have a mile to go

Friends, losing sight of the finish line has caused more people to give up than nearly any other
reason

Illus Florence Chadwick was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions.
An amazing distance swimmer who in 1951, July 4th, attempted to swim from Catalina Island to
the California coast. The challenge was not the distance, but the cold waters of the Pacific. To
complicate matters, a dense fog lay over the entire area, making it impossible for her to see land.
After about 15 hours in the water, and within a half mile of her goal, Chadwick gave up. She
later told a reporter, "I'm not excusing myself. But if I could have seen land, I might have made
it." Soon, she attempted the feat again. And once again a misty veil obscured the coastline and
she couldn't see the shore. But this time she made it because she kept reminding herself that land
was there. With that confidence she swam on and made it, and even breaking the men's record by
2 hours!

Jude is training us to be contenders for the Gospel and battle false teaching!

PP Build up in the Word, pray in the Spirit, keep in God's love, and hope in His mercy

*“build yourselves up in your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the
love of God, wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”*

Amen?

Pray