

When I was a teenager, I bought my first “boning knife”. It was a Vitronox with a wooden handle, and I sharpened it up (razor sharp); and I made a leather sheath for it.

And so that was my:

- *pigging knife; and*
- *boning knife;*
- *killing sheep knife; and*
- *cutting legs off roos for dogs knife*
- *– it was my everything knife.*

Anyway, one day mum asked me to cut up some meat for her, and I can't remember what meat it was, but it came wrapped up in butchers paper. Anyway, I did what I was asked, and I left the knife and cutting board and soiled paper all sitting on the bench for mum to deal with, and I went out to work...

Later that afternoon I went looking for my knife (so I could put it back in its sheath), and I couldn't find it. And it took a while before we realised, it might've been bundled up with the soiled smelly bloody paper and thrown in the incinerator. And so I went and scratched through the ashes, and there I found a burned blade, with no timber handle. It was all very sad.

Last week, we began studying the Book of Jude. And the message of Jude, is that **the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints** is under attack. In the Christian church, Godly doctrine is under attack. And so Jude exhorts us to “Contend/struggle/fight for THE FAITH”.

False teachers (think: wolves in sheep's clothing) have snuck into the church, and they pervert the grace of God into sensuality... And filled with a sense of spiritual pride and superiority, they lead people astray; and they affirm those who are tempted by their sensual sin, and they teach them that that's not a problem – just go with it.

They affirm them **in** their sin by claiming “We don't have to follow God's laws – that's a thing of the past. We now live by grace.”

And the message last week, is that these false teachers will be judged.

In their spiritual arrogance, they believe they were all very safe, but Jude very bluntly tells us that they are doomed for the eternal fires of God's judgment.

And we ended last week's message by seeing a contrast: He's writing to the faithful, and they are: Beloved; Kept; Called. And his prayer for them, is a multiplication of Mercy; Peace; Love... — But within the church, there are the grumbling malcontents, following their own sinful desires & set apart for judgment... — What a contrast...

And so we are to contend for **THE FAITH**, once and for all, delivered to the Saints. In our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His truth, there is mercy, peace and love. Outside of **THE FAITH** is judgment.

But last week, we didn't get to hear **how** to contend for the faith. *Like that good (almost brand new) boning knife, that got caught up in the foul rubbish and got burned*, how do we contend for the faith, and how do we make sure that we and others in the church, don't get all tangled up in the foul perversion of the Gospel that uses grace for an excuse for ungodliness and leads to destruction???

1. Remember

There is no kingdom more at risk, than a kingdom that is unaware that it has an enemy. And even more at risk, not knowing that this enemy has infiltrated and is now an enemy within.

In the church, not many of us want to hear a warning, “Look out for false teachers”. Especially when those teachers might come across as being friendly; amenable; popular. And especially when a teacher commands a spiritual authority, and their message majors on grace (It's hard to not like that person)...

And that's why the first thing we have to do, is “remember”. The apostles and our Lord Jesus Christ told us that there would be false teachers in the church.

- Jesus told us that they would be wolves in sheep's clothingⁱ. They might appear Godly, but they're ungodly.
- Paul told us that they would pervert the way of truthⁱⁱ;

- Mark 13:(ESV)²² **For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.**
23 But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

- Paul warned us that false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. And we shouldn't be surprised by that, because Satan himself tries to pass himself off as an angel of lightⁱⁱⁱ.

And those who **refuse** to love the truth, will instead, love what is false^{iv}.

- Peter warned us, “**There will be false prophets among you**”^v”.

It's not that you have a paranoid preacher, rabbiting on about things that don't exist and who jumps at shadows...

The Christian church is under attack – do not be surprised by that. Jesus warned us; The Apostles warned us. “**In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.**”

In the Psalms and Wisdom^{vi} literature in the Old Testament, a “scoffer”, is often presented as one who ignores God and ignores His commands. E.g.

Psalm 1:1–2 (ESV)

1 Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of YHWH,
and on His law he meditates day and night.

So, Remember. We are living in the last days. When Jesus ascended into Heaven, we entered “The Last Days”. The next thing, is He comes back. And in these last days, there will be scoffers, who reject holiness and God’s moral law, and instead, they will embrace ungodly perversions of grace. **Remember;** Don’t get caught out. **Watch** out for them!

2. Recognise. Recognise ungodly teaching and ungodly behaviour for what it is.

Jude says: ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

It takes wisdom and discernment, to be able to distinguish between ungodly and Godly. But it’s not that hard. I suspect that what allows ungodly teaching to flourish within the church, is that sort of message appeals to the fleshly nature, it’s actually what many folk want to hear. It’s something that affirms them in their ungodliness.

2 Timothy 4:(ESV) ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves

teachers to suit their own passions,⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

We need to be alert, and we need to recognise ungodly teaching and ungodly behaviour for what it is. Jesus said, “By their fruit you will know them.”

3. A strong, healthy body, resists infection.

3. Build up GODLY, HOLY faith within the church

∇²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith....

How do we build ourselves up? ... With what is Godly, of course. Godly teaching; Studying the Scriptures; Holding firm to the Gospel.

If what is coming under attack, is the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. This is what we must embrace/teach/learn/fight for.

It is our most holy faith. Do you know what holiness means? It means sanctified/set apart/pure/holy... – To be holy, is to be entirely different from the world...

To contend for the faith, includes standing strong in the faith. When he says “build yourselves up” it’s not so much an

individual action – he’s talking to a church. As a church, we must be building each other up in our **most holy faith**.

Not the most lax/popular/world-friendly faith – the most holy faith...

When you visit a church, you can very quickly see what sort of “building up” is happening in that church.

- Is its aim, to build up in numbers at the expense of holiness?
- Or is its aim to build up in holiness and Godliness???

Take notice: What kind of message is being given here? Is it a message:

- that appeals to the flesh;
- that appeals to my love of self or love of money;
- that appeals to my base animal instincts?

Or is it a message that:

- convicts me of sin; and
- urges us to live in righteousness and holiness
- fixes our eyes on eternity and urges us to forsake all else for the sake of Jesus?

Build up Holy Godly faith within the church.

4. How we pray, matters.

4. Pray Spiritual Prayers

BTW, a spiritual prayer doesn't mean that it's louder; and it doesn't mean that it's prayed with a torrent of words like an auctioneer.

A spiritual prayer, is about **what** we pray for. And remember, when we pray, we're talking to our Heavenly Father.

What we pray for, tells us a lot about what kind of gospel we embrace. And we contend for the faith, by praying Spiritual prayers. We do not battle against flesh and blood – the battle belongs to the Lord. And so we pray.

We pray:

- for the unsaved;
- that they would hear **THE GOSPEL** and **repent** of sin to be saved;
- that their lives would be transformed;
- for those who are being led and tempted by sensual sin, that they would hear and receive correction, and embrace holiness;
- that the faith that was taught by Jesus and the Apostles to the early church, would be the faith that is taught and proclaimed here.

Prayer – Spiritual prayer, is the most powerful armament at our disposal as we contend for the faith.

5. Endure in God's love by keeping His commands

Back in V1, we were told that we are “kept” – God keeps us. But now we're told to keep ourselves. V²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God... What's going on here?

Many people are very quick to quote to me, Romans 8: “**Nothing** can separate us from the love of God”... Is that true??? “But the Bible says that it's true.” Does it?

Let's take a look at it: Romans 8:35-39 (ESV)

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, that has become a proof-text for OSAS (once I've become a Christian, I can never stop being a Christian)...

But Rom 8 isn't talking about that. It's talking about when we are in Christ. When I am in Christ, and my faith is in Him, nothing can separate me from the love of God. And it's specifically talking about persecution.... The devil's aim of persecution, is to get us to deny Jesus. And the carrot is, "If you deny Jesus, you can save your earthly life. If you don't, I'm going to kill you."

But to a person of faith, that is no threat. Because even if you take my body, you cannot take my soul. Romans 8 is entirely about the faithful, who, at the threat of death, will not let go of their faith. And because they are in Christ, they are in the love of God...

Do you notice that there is something that is not listed there as something that can't take me away from the love of God? "Myself"... We have to keep ourselves in the love of God? How do we do that? We remain in Christ, and remain in His love.

John 15: (ESV)

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide (remain) in my love. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

If I don't keep the commandments of our Lord, I'm not going to experience Christian joy – Why not? – because I'm not in Christ, and I'm not in His love.

It distils it down for us doesn't it – It becomes a choice between loving things of the flesh and loving sensual sin, and being enveloped by ungodliness... **Or** obeying our Lord's commands and being enveloped in His love, joy and peace...

And so, we contend for THE FAITH by keeping ourselves in the love of God by loving Him and loving His commands.

How long do we keep that up for? Well, it's not a burden because we:

6. Wait in hope.

The great hope of Disciples of Jesus, is hope eternal. What are we waiting for? We are waiting for the return of Jesus. He's coming soon. Don't know when. It could be this afternoon, or it could be in 1000 years. We don't know when. But we wait for the day of His mercy to come. It's interesting you know, for those who are in Christ, the day of the Lord will be a day of mercy and peace. But for those who pervert "The Faith", it'll be a day of turmoil; judgment and retribution.

And so we wait for the day of His coming.

But the trouble is, we live in the "Buy-Now-Pay-Later" age. We live in an age that demands immediate gratification.

And I don't know about you, but the gospel message that I so often hear being preached today, often has far less to do with holiness and eternal life, and it's more likely to be about:

- how to be happy;

- how to get ahead in the world;
- how to get rich;
- how to be a person of influence;
- how to get my wife to love me;
- how to be a happy family;
- and feel fulfilled in life...

And all that sort of stuff, that's stuff to appeal to an immediate sense of gratification. And that's why it's so popular to the world...

THE FAITH – the great hope of Disciples of Jesus though, is hope eternal. And so Jude reminds us that as we contend for the faith, we are **waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.**

Now, waiting doesn't mean sitting around; twiddling our thumbs; - business as usual... **waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life** involves orientating our whole life, **to** this great hope we have... – Living **in** Christ, and living **in** Holiness.

We do not live for today – We live for eternity.

And Jude is reminding us that we (as a people who are in Christ) receive mercy. And if God has shown mercy to us, we too, must be merciful to those who are tempted to sin; those who do sin; and even those who lead others into sin... If I am not merciful to the sinner, maybe I should ask myself the

question, “Do I fully realise the mercy that I’ve received from God?”

And so we come to Point:

7. Correct with saving mercy

And how we do that, depends on ‘how far gone’ someone is:

The first word, is for:

a. Those who are swaying

Jude says: **have mercy on those who doubt;**

When a disciple of Jesus is struggling with temptation, and they hear a teaching that claims all sorts of spiritual authority, and it tells them that they don’t have to worry about that – that’s not a sin for them, they may begin to doubt.

For Disciples of Jesus to contend for the faith, means we need to be merciful like our God is merciful. And when a person doubts, we gently correct. We do all of what we’ve talked about above.

- We take them to the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, and help them to **remember**, : We have been told, there will be ungodly teachers who entice disciples of Jesus to follow ungodly passions;
- We help them to recognise that what’s causing them to doubt, is what we were being warned about.

And to **recognise** that the sin they are being led to is

ungodly

- We help to build them up in a Godly and holy faith.
- We lead them into Spiritual prayer, and we pray for them.
- We show them how the joy of being in the Love of Christ Jesus, means we will desire to also keep His commands.
- We remind them how we wait in hope together. And when Jesus returns, He's coming for a pure bride. And how as we wait in hope, our whole life is orientated toward this hope.
- And because God has been merciful to us, we do all of this with mercy...

The second word, is for:

b. Those who have been enticed to sin

Jude says: ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire;

Now, to understand this, we need to realise that he's quoting from the Old Testament prophet Zechariah 3.

Zechariah has a vision. The high priest of Jerusalem – he represents God's chosen people. (God had chosen Israel). They are a brand, plucked from the fire. This in itself, is a picture of the mercy of God. Israel deserved the eternal fires of punishment, but God plucked them from those fires...

But the problem is, they weren't living in holiness. In Zechariah, we have the picture of the high priest, **standing before the angel of the Lord, clothed with filthy garments...**

Wherever the bible talks about "filthy garments", it's a picture of our sin and unholiness... And what a horrible picture this is – he represents the people who have been saved by the mercy of God, but he's filthy with unholiness...

And the word is Zechariah 3... "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.". And God did.

And then the word of The Lord said: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.

Where is he? The vision is set before God and the Angels.

And then he goes on to tell the High Priest, that he was a sign for those who were yet to come, and he puts forward the image of when the Messiah comes. This is an image for us...

How do we contend for the faith, with those who have been enticed to sin???

We remind them of the mercy of God. When they were saved, they were plucked from the fire, but as they reject God, and

reject His commands, and as they reject “THE FAITH”, and are led astray by a perversion of grace into sensuality, they are in danger of the fires of judgment once again.

If we walk in God’s ways and keep His charge, He will give us right of access to the throne-room of Heaven...

It’s a much sterner word for those who have been enticed to sin, but it’s still done with mercy.

But the word gets even stronger for the 3rd group.

c. Those who have COMMITTED themselves to a life of ungodliness (includes ungodly teachers)

Jude says: **to others** ... Alright, we’ve covered those who doubt; Next was those who have been led into sin; What’s left? It has to be the scoffers – it has to be those who have committed themselves to the ungodly path, and they now follow their own ungodly passions.

Jude says: **to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.**

Probably the easiest way of saying this is “Love the sinner, hate the sin.” Even the worst of sinners – even corruptors of the Gospel, are to be shown mercy, but mercy with fear.

Even when someone embraces a life of sin, and **commits** themselves on a godless trajectory, our hope and our prayer, should remain, that they will repent and be forgiven.

But, what's this "with fear" bit? It's fear of God. We're not meant to be afraid of sinners. It's fear of God. And **hating even the garment stained by the flesh** means, don't let the perversion of the Gospel or sensual sin rub off on us, or be a temptation to us.

True godliness is being able to hate sin with every fibre of our being, and yet loving the one who sins, so much we are filled with mercy for them, and pray for their salvation, whilst not being polluted by their sin ourselves.

And so, this is how we contend for the faith.

1. We remember the warning that Jesus and the apostles gave – to watch out for false teachers;
2. We need to recognise ungodly actions and ungodly teaching for what it is
3. We build up **Godly** holy faith within the church.
4. We pray spiritual prayer – we pray for Godly things rather than fleshly stuff.
5. We endure in God's love by keeping His commands.
6. We focus on our eternal hope and wait for the return of Jesus, with our whole life orientated toward this hope; and

7. We correct with saving mercy...

- a) Very gently for those who doubt, pointing them back towards Christ;

- b) Very bluntly, with those who have been led into sin, warning them that their path could lead them to destruction;

- c) And for those who have committed themselves to the godless path, in mercy we pray for them, and try to correct them, but it may come to the point where they're not welcome in the church anymore, because they are polluting the Gospel.

We contend for the faith because in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His truth, there is mercy, peace and love. Outside of THE FAITH is judgment.

Let's pray:

Strengthen us,
Lord we pray.

Build up Godly, Holy faith within this church.
As we await for the return of Our Lord,
keep us vigilant;
keep us pure;

Strengthen us,
so that we would abide in Your love,

walking by your glorious commands.

Lord, give us love and mercy for the sinner.

Remind us of the great mercy You have shown us;
as You give us many opportunities
to show mercy to the sinner,
and mercy, even to those who have led others astray.

Lord, we pray for those who are doubting.

Use us as a church, to strengthen them,
that they do not fall.

We pray for those who have been led to sin.

Lord, convict them of their sin,
and open their ears to heed the warning:
Repent...

And Lord,

we pray for those who have committed themselves
to a **life** of sin and ungodliness.

For us, it's sometimes hard to acknowledge
that those we love, have fallen so far...

Lord, we pray for them.

Convict them;

Lead them to repentance;

And guard us,

that none would be caught up
in a foul perversion of grace.

We pray for their restoration Lord,
And we wait for you.
Come Lord Jesus.

Amen.

ⁱ Matthew 7:15

ⁱⁱ Galatians 1:6-7

ⁱⁱⁱ 2 Corinthians 11:13

^{iv} 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11

^v 2 Peter 2:1

^{vi} Proverbs 1:20-33