“Contend For The Faith”

February 6, 2016

III John 1:1-8

The Bible is the Word of God. And it was written by the Holy Spirit. And He included no less than 3,237 people in it. Now, if the LORD considered these 3,237 as important, we should ask why.

Today’s sermon comes from one of those people; a man who did *not* grow up believing on Christ. He had parents who knew the LORD and walked Him. But it wasn’t until he was in his thirties that he came to believe on the Name of the LORD Jesus Christ.

That man’s name is Jude. And I’d like to have you listen with me today to what Jude says. His message is found in your Bible in the Book that carries his name: Jude. It’s the Book that comes just before the Book of Revelation. There’s only one chapter in Jude, just twenty-five verses. Now, it *isn’t* the shortest book in the NT. But you could easily memorize it if you put your mind to it. Would you open your Bible with me today to Jude?

I’ve titled today’s sermon “Contend For The Faith.” Shall we pray? *“LORD, I pray that your word might be life and truth to my heart today and that I might know you better and live more obediently. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Now, you might already know that Jesus had a few sisters. But did you know that he had four brothers? There was James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude; Jude being the same Jude that wrote this little NT epistle.

Have you ever called someone intending to speak about one thing and ended up on a completely different topic? That’s the Book of Jude. Let me show you what I mean?
Jude 1:1 *“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: (2) Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. (3) Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful [necessary] for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

Jude had intended to write one message and he wrote another; obviously under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; obviously bound by the Holy Spirit to say something other than he intended.

And I wondered why. Why do you make a phone call and end up talking about something else? Why would you write a letter to someone with one thing in mind and then write another? Here’s why. It’s more important.

Jude and his three brothers Joseph, James, and Simon, did not believe that their brother Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. It wasn’t until *after* the Crucifixion and *after* the Resurrection that they came to believe on Him. And you find all three brothers in the Upper Room in Acts chapter one.

What’s on my heart today comes directly from Jude three where he writes this “Contend for the faith.” Jude 1:3 “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful [necessary] for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly* ***contend for the faith*** *which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

What do you stand for? Some things are not worthy standing up for. Now some are. And we all make our own individual judgments as to what we’ll stand up for and what we won’t stand up for. And it takes effort to stand up for something, doesn’t it?

Let’s say you are politically motivated. Let’s say you strongly believe that a particular man or woman that is running for political office. Now, let’s say you decided to campaign for him, go door-to-door and attempt to get others to vote for him, you would call that contending.

Well, there’s only one thing that your Bible tells you is worth contending for. And that is in verse three *“the faith once delivered unto the Saints.”* Doesn’t that imply that there’s little else in this world that has the value this does and that God expects you and me to contend for it?

Now maybe you’ll see the meaning by looking at the very opposite of contend, which is “abandon the cause, “give in” “leave the contending to someone else.” This afternoon two NFL teams will be competing. And even though you will be rooting for one of them, you will not be contending. You’ll be sitting on your couch, relaxing, raising your voice to be heard, and just enjoying the game - at home. That’s not contending. That might be cheering. But it’s not contending. The ones who will be contending will be the ones our on the field. But, when you do something intentional; something that has effort and heart behind it, then you are contending.

Now, it’s one specific thing you are to put your effort into and to stand up for. And that is *“the faith once delivered unto the Saints.”*

And yes, Missionaries and Pastors and Evangelists and such should certainly be contending for the faith. But, as you are about to see, Jude is not writing to Missionaries or Pastors or Evangelists. How do I know that? Because it’s *“the faith once delivered unto the Saints,”* not merely the Missionaries and Pastors.

But what does Brother Jude want you and me to contend for with him? Look again with me at Jude three. Jude 1:3 “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

Just one thing is on Jude’s heart. Now, remember with me that this is the younger brother of Jesus. He’s exhorting you and me to contend for just one thing; the faith. So, is there something you believe in that is worth your contending for? Is there anything in your Bible that you’d really like someone else to know and believe?

You see, Jude is writing something under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to people who would live not just in his day, but some 2,000 years after him. What is that? It’s the “faith once delivered unto the Saints.” It’s the faith that’s been delivered to you and me.

We together are commanded by the LORD to get up from sitting and actually *do* something. It’s the difference between someone who sits in the stands and someone who is out on the field attempting to accomplish something.

Would you agree with me that this is a command directly to you and me? Would you believe with me that the Holy Spirit placed this in the Bible so that Emmanuel Baptist Church in 2016 would receive these words from God’s heart to their hearts? So, would you listen with me today to the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Are you contending today? Have you found anything worth standing for today? Isn’t the faith once delivered unto the Saints worth contending for? Do you want someone else to believe what you do; to know what you know; to receive what you have received; to have what you have; to do what you do? Then, as God has commanded you “contend for the faith.”

Now, in order to truly focus on the message of Jude, I need to have you read with me just one other NT passage that uses this same word. It’s Colossians 4:12. Maybe Colossians 4:12 will help you see just what it means to contend.

Colossians 4:12 *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”*

Do you see the sense of the word “contend” here? It is the exact same word in the original language. Colossians 4:12 *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always* ***labouring fervently*** *for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”*

The translation here makes it a bit clearer. It’s translated here “laboring fervently.” And in this case, the man Epaphras, Paul says, greets the Colossians while he “contends” for them in prayer. So, another way to translate “contend” is to say “labor fervently.”

Do you have this one thing that you’d really labor fervently for? Is it your desire that someone else would know and believe and discover what the LORD has done in your heart regarding faith? Would there be one thing regarding your faith that that you’d want to tell someone? Would it be the Gospel? Would it be Who Jesus really is? Would it be faith in the Son of God?

Do you want anybody in your family or among your friends or those you work with or those you associate with to know just one thing? Now – have you done anything about that? If you have, if you’ve attempted to persuade anyone to agree with you about that, then you are, according to the Holy Spirit and according to Jude, the Brother of Jesus, a Contender; a Contender for the faith.

Further, let me show you here who it is that Jude sent his letter to. Go back with me to verse one. Jude 1:1 Jude 1:1 *“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: …”*

Verse one – To them that are sanctified in God, the Father; Verse one – To them that are preserved in Jesus Christ; Verse one – To them that are called. The sanctified; the preserver, and the called; those are the ones Jude, by the Holy Spirit is calling to contend for the faith.

These are three of the greatest things that have happened to every Christian.

First, Christian, you are sanctified. Now, I realize that there are some Christians who believe they have to work towards sanctification. But that’s not what we find here. What Jude is doing here is this. He’s describing something the LORD has done to you; something that happened to you already.

This is “past tense.” It’s also passive; which means you’ve had something happen to you. And what is that? “Sanctify” should never be allowed to be a stumbling block to you Christian. It means “set apart.” You’ve been set apart to God’s use. And if you’ve been “set apart for God’s use,” that means you’ve been “made holy.”

And yes, there is a command to “be holy.” But that simply means we are to express to those around you the holiness that God has already worked into you. Sanctification should never be allowed to disturb your soul. I know sometimes it does. But this is a huge transforming action that God has done upon you at the day you were saved.

Here’s what it is. “Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the nature that controlled Him will control us.” If you read “My Utmost For His Highest,” this is tomorrow’s (February 8th) entry [O. Chambers in “My Utmost For His Highest”].

At the moment you were saved, God joined you eternally to His Son. All that He is is all that you are. You belong the Christ. And His nature is now in you. And that nature is a holy one. You are among the sanctified.

So, here’s what the ones who sanctified do. “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should* ***earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints****.”*

Now, that’s just one third of why you can and must contend for the faith once delivered. Don’t forget. It’s been delivered “unto the Saints.”

Second, Christian, you are preserved in Jesus Christ. “Preserved” means “kept.” It means “I belong to the Son of God.” “I’m His.” It comes from a Greek noun. And that noun is found all over the NT. It’s the word “a guard.”

Not only are you and I sanctified. We are “guarded.” It means “protected.” It means Someone, the LORD, has immediate and constant watch over you. He may have a lot to do all day and all night. But one of the main things the LORD does is to keep His eye on you to protect you.

Folks, there is a spiritual protection that the LORD extends to you.

Now some Christians try their best to quote “keep themselves saved.” They pray hard. They obey even when they don’t want to. They try their best to be a “good Christian.” But, as you can easily see, the work that God does in the Christian is a truly amazing work. He’s your Preserver.

When someone, let’s say, an insurance adjustor, comes to your home because your water heater has cracked and your entire first floor has three inches of water in it – while you were are work. The adjustor arrives with a copy of your policy in hand. He surveys the damage; measures the rooms, and records everything with his camera. Then, he sits down at your dining room table and says “you’re covered.”

He means “you’re protected.” And now your heart is at rest. You has no reason to worry. Everything is covered under your policy.

Well, you have a much, much better policy with the LORD of Heaven. So, when you, as a child of Heaven, get a grasp on the facts of just who you are and just what God has given to you and done for you, your heart becomes calm, quiet, and settled. No more agitation. No unrest. You are kept by God Himself. You are one of God’s preserved. He’s the One Who’s got your back.

First, you are among the sanctified.

Second, you are among the preserved.

And third, Jude is writing this epistle to the called.

One of the wonderful things that has happened to me now that I am saved is this. I can and do have an ear for the voice of God. I, like you, am among the called. God has spoken. I heard His voice and I responded to Him.

When I was just fifteen years old, I heard the Gospel through Evangelist Billy Graham when I attended a movie called “The Restless Ones.” God spoke to my heart. I was convicted that I was a sinner. I heard the Good News that Jesus Christ shed His blood over my sins. I responded to that voice on December 9, 1967. On that day, I heard the LORD’s call. He called to me in my sin. He called me out of the darkness of sin and condemnation. Today, I am, like you, one of “the Called.” I’ve been called into the Light. I have been called to a life different than the one I lived as a sinner.

Now, let me remind you of something very important here. You might be one of those who believe the Pastor has been called into the ministry, but you are not.

Folks, if that was so, why then didn’t Jude just write to Pastors or even just to Elders? It’s because every Christian has been called. You have a heart that has spiritual ears. You’ve heard His call. You’ve been called to a new life.

Now, having looked at the ones who Jude writes to, can you see just who it is that he commands to contend for the faith? It’s you. You have this personal relationship with God as one who is sanctified, preserved, and called. So, just the fact that you belong to Him, you are commanded to contend for the faith.

Now, let me remind you of one more of these glorious facts. Look with me at verse three again. Who is it that Jude is writing to?

Jude 1:3 “***Beloved,*** *when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

Of all the glorious things the LORD could say about you and me before He commands me to contend for the faith, this might be the greatest. We are “beloved.”

It’s great to think that a husband might call his wife “my beloved.” It’s great to think that we could easily all our children “our beloved.” And that would be true. But you are “beloved of God.”

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians Church, he calls them “brethren beloved.” And here Jude, the brother of Jesus, reminds you and me that there is a very special relationship we have with our Creator and our Savior. It’s a relationship based upon love.

There is nothing so marvelous than to be loved by God and to know it.

Now, what is God’s command to the sanctified, the preserved, the called, and the ones who are beloved of God? It is to “contend for the faith.”

God has done something is your heart that defies complete explanation. The Creator has connected to the created. God has injected Himself into my personal life.

Sometimes we think this. We don’t want to get into someone’s personal life. We are afraid they’ll be offended if we talk with them about something so personal as their relationship with God.

But folks, the Gospel is about their personal lives. It’s a very personal thing when you introduce the Name of Jesus into a conversation at work, at school, or at the store.

It’s a personal decision. But, how can anyone make a personal decision about Jesus Christ if they don’t hear the largest and best personal news ever recorded?

When was the last time you got “personal” with someone about the Person and work of Jesus Christ? Can you imagine what would happen to your life if you brought the Name of Jesus into a conversation this week?

Have you been praying for anyone that you know needs to be saved? Is it worth it to be “personal” with them? Yes.

Jude writes to people who have begun a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That personal relationship is the reason you can take this message out this week.

Is there anything today that is not personal? Suppose I said to you “Who’s your favorite football team?” Isn’t your answer going to be something that is personal to you? Where do you live? That’s personal. What do you do for a living? That’s personal. Every phone call; every text; every conversation you have deals with something personal.

Why is the Gospel any different?

Here’s Paulus Wiratno. He was born into Muslim family in Indonesia. Indonesia, by the way, has the largest concentration of Muslims anywhere in the world. His grandfather was a Muslim Imam.

On his fifteenth birthday Paulus’ parents came to him and told him this. “Paulus, you are now a man. You are a Muslim man. Now, as a man, you have the right to kill the infidels. Who are the infidels? They are the Christians.

So Paulus went to his high school and began to look for someone who was a Christian and who he could kill. Most everyone around him was a Muslim. But he spotted one young teen. He was different. He was kind. He was helpful. He shared his lunch. And Paulus thought “Maybe he’s a Christian. If so, I can kill him.”

So, he spoke to this young teen and said to him “You’re different. Are you a Christian?” The teen answered him this way. “I am trying to imitate Jesus in everything I do. I try to do the thing that Jesus would do. If that’s what a Christian is, then yes, I am a Christian.”

Paulus was so affected by the teenager’s desire to be like Jesus that he started to do the same thing. Soon, he too became a genuine Believer in Christ.

Now, last year, 2015, at the age of 27, Paulus saw 1,600 Muslims become Christians by receiving Jesus as their LORD and Savior.

How? Paulus decided he would contend for the faith by “imitating Jesus.” And as he “imitated” Jesus, people noticed. And as they noticed, he found he could speak to them about something personal; his personal relationship to God and his personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Don’t you know someone who might listen to you if you decided today to contend for the faith this week? Who would that be? Would you be willing to bring the Name of Jesus into a conversation this week at school or at work or in the elevator?

Nearly everything is personal today. Had Paulus not asked a personal question of that Christian teen in his high school, he might never have found the LORD Jesus.

Will you decide to be a contender for the faith this week? If so, bow your head with me and pray this prayer. *“LORD, help me to introduce your Name into just one conversation this week because it will be one more than I did last week. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Let’s obey the LORD and be a contender this week.

Will it be this? “I will obey you LORD. I surrender my thoughts to your thoughts. I will be a contender for the faith?” What will it be?

Will you surrender yourself to His strength and control? Here’s the Prayer of Surrender. *“Father, I surrender my whole life to you today; again. You have saved me for Yourself. Do with me whatever You choose. I am available for You to strengthen me to deal with everything I have to face today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Sing Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”