

# Jude verse 3 and 20-21

## Part 1

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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:00] Jude verse 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 you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

And then done, please, to verse 20, But ye, Beloved, building up yourselves on your most [00:01:07] holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

God will bless the reading of his precious work.

I was always intrigued in reading about the saintly J. G. Bellet of Dublin, one of the early brothers, one of the first who met to break bread there, and sometimes he would be going to take a meeting somewhere, and as he walked to the place of meeting, he'd [00:02:06] speak with his daughter, and he'd be telling her, as they went along, what he was going to speak on when he got there.

And then when he got there, he spoke on something completely different, so he was spurred of God and led him into an opposite train of thought.

I had to think of that when we read these verses tonight, because Jude intended to write to the believers about the common salvation, but then he found that it was needful instead to exhort them to earnestly contend for the faith.

[00:03:02] And assuredly, there's much more in this than that the speaker might be free from time to time as occasion demands to change the subject on which he intends to speak. The New Testament, after we read the Gospels, the historical writings commence with the Acts of the Apostles.

But when we get to the close of the New Testament canon, right before the book of Revelation, and it's significant, surely, that even though the epistles of John are there, and that John also received the revelation of Jesus Christ, instead of John's writings being comprised together at the close, here, inserted between the epistles and the closing of the prophecy, we have this epistle of Jude.

And really, what Jude concerns himself with is the Acts of Apostates.

[00:04:07] Christianity began with the Acts of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles, a bright start.

Sadly, we know from the testimony of Scripture that it ends rather differently. It ends in judgment. There are ungodly men here who have crept in, who will be judged.

And we have a very dark picture, a picture similar in many respects to the day in which we are living. So it was necessary for Jude to encourage these believers to contend for the faith.

And that's our responsibility, beloved friends gathered here in this hour day. Pleasant sometimes to take up the matter of the common salvation. [00:05:04] Pleasant to look at the blessings that we have in Christ, the things that we enjoy together, the bright prospect, heavens before us, the privileged side.

But of course, as well as privilege in the Christian pathway, there's this matter of responsibility.

And the responsibility here drawn to our attention is the responsibility of contending for the faith. So that, essentially, is the message which I want to leave with you this afternoon. Contend for the faith to build up ourselves in our most holy faith, the necessary path that confronts us on earth.

So I want to look really essentially at the question, who is to contend for the faith? And then I want to consider what it is to contend for the faith. [00:06:02] And closely associated with that, what is the faith for which we are to contend? Who is to contend for the faith, first of all?

Jude contemplates a condition of things very similar to what we have in 2 Timothy.

Failure, departure, false doctrine, men departing from the faith.

But the difference is that in Timothy, the responsibility is placed on the individual.

Timothy was a servant of the Lord.

But when we come to look at the book of Jude, we find that this is a responsibility for us all. [00:07:09] There are no exceptions here.

Look carefully at who it's addressed to.

It's to those that are sanctified by God the Father. Those that are preserved in Jesus Christ. Those that are called.

That's a description of you and me as we are believers. It's a description of every child of God. We are beloved in God the Father. We are preserved in Jesus Christ. We are called one.

So we cannot escape from the responsibility here.

Someone might say, oh, but I'm not a speaker.

[00:08:08] I'm not a platform man. I don't wish to get involved with these questions contending for the faith.

Ah, but that's not the question. Are you beloved of God? Well, then, are you?

Someone else might say, well, I don't have any responsibility in my local assembly. I'm not a responsible brother. I'm not in the oversight. So leave it to someone else. You're one of the called ones.

I'm not in any committee. I'm not an influential figure. I don't take to do with these questions that arise from time to time. Why not?

Not to serve to minorities.

Not for a clergy. [00:09:01] Not for those who are set apart or who have special responsibilities. You can be thankful for those who have special responsibilities and who exercise them in a godly way. But the responsibility comes right down to each individual who is the Lord, to those who are beloved, and those who are prepared in Jesus Christ. Ah, but then someone says, I'm not a brother. I'm just a sister.

This shouldn't really concern me.

John wrote an epistle to an elect lady, a sister, and he told her, you know, he said, if anyone comes to your door and brings not the doctrine of Christ, and I understand by that the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, [00:10:03] Jesus Christ come in the flesh, his pre-incarnate existence, and the fact that he was here in perfect manhood, God and man, in one person, if someone comes to the door, Jehovah witness them, whatever it might be, brings not this doctrine. It comes in the way of teaching.

That this sister was not even to bid them the time of death, wasn't to greet them, wasn't to say God forbid. Dear brothers and sisters, this is not a question for brothers, for responsible brothers. It's a question for brothers and sisters, for each and every one of us. If we call in the name of the Lord out of a pure heart, well then, we collectively and individually are responsible to contend for things.

[00:11:05] Someone else says, ah, I'm just a young person. These questions are beyond me.

I'm still at school or I'm at college or I'm studying. What? You devote hours?

You devote days?

Years?

To your school studies?

You've got books?

You've got files?

You've got notes?

And you haven't time to inquire into God's word?

Haven't time to seek to say what God says about important matters? Shame on you.

[00:12:01] You're a young person here today. How is your knowledge of the word of God? I remember, and I've said it before, and it's worth thought, I remember an instructed brother and a naval Bible teacher, he said to me, he said to us, not to speak personally, he said, if you don't have the truth of God by the time you're 21, you're not going to have it. Perhaps you can't go backwards in time.

You've passed that threshold. But the point is, at the moment of opportunity, when the brain is, when the grey cells are active, receptive, and you can take interest, study the scriptures, study the writings of those that are instructed in the truth, attend the meetings, come to the lectures or the Bible reading or fellowship meetings, [00:13:04] listen to the tapes, learn more about common salvation, about the faith for which we are to contend, in order that we might be built up and grow thereby. So let's not put off our responsibility in this matter. It's a matter for each one of us, where to contend for the faith, once delivered unto the saints.

So much then for who is to contend.

I think I want to say a little word about what contending for the faith is. The first thing I want to say is that we don't want to major and minor. It's not a question here about where the collection box goes, [00:14:04] whether it goes on the table or under the table or at the back of the room. Sadly, I've heard of meetings that have split, and such a mundane question as that.

It's not a question here of whether we stand to sing or sit to sing, what our bodily posture is, or whether when one brother stands to pray the congregation stands or sits, because of course those who have travelled know that these matters differ from country to country. It's not a matter of whether someone brings a guitar along to a Sunday school picnic or something like that. We want to be realistic. We want to keep things in perspective. We want to grasp that we're dealing with fundamentals. We want to make that distinction. We want to see that when it comes to the foundations of the faith, [00:15:02] when it comes to truths that touch the glory and honour of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who we associate with in that regard, when it comes to the basis of salvation by faith alone, when it comes to a question of the inspiration of the word of God, when it comes to a question of fundamentals, when Satan, as no one else, has principalities and powers mustering there on scenery, when it comes to questions of that nature, beloved, we need to stand, and we need to contend, and we need to be actors for the faith.

It's not a question always of dealing with negatives either, or difficulties, because there's a class, [00:16:05] never seem to get their mind on anything else.

They can go from Dan to Beersheba and back again. They can go from Land's End to John of Gross, and go from Brighton to Vendotti, maybe to France and Germany for good measure. And they can give you a catalogue of all the faults and failings and difficulties amongst the same sort of walking encyclopedia of difficulties.

Very easy, and you know that class of believer is not new. Some who have read Pilgrim's Progress will be aware of a character there. He lived no way but downwards with a muckrake in his hand. And another of the old Puritan worthies, Richard Baxter, [00:17:01] he gave a series of sermons at St. Dunstan's in Fleet Street, and he entitled it, The Mischiefs of Self-Ignorance and the Benefits of Self-Acquaintance.

And really the substance of his remarks was to prevent persons devouring others when they did not

know themselves.

What I'm saying is, it's very easy to pull down. It's very easy to be negative. It's very easy to highlight problems. Sadly, it's easy for some of us sometimes to create problems and to create needless problems.

But wisdom is needed to find solutions to difficulties, to carry our brethren with us, and to arrive at an outcome that is to the glory of God [00:18:07] and that is satisfactory.

So we mustn't misunderstand contending for the faith as if it's always just seeking to draw attention to the problems.

It's much more positive than that.

And I have an extract here from Macintosh.

In the year 1857, C. H. Macintosh, the loved author of the Notes on the Pentateuch and other writings, was in Coleraine in Ireland. And he resumed a course of lectures for the winter months. And he answered a charge that was being made against the brethren. [00:19:01] He said he wanted to meet another charge which is frequently prepared against us, that is to say the maintenance of the Jesuitical reserve in reference to our peculiar opinions.

And he says, this charge is totally unfounded.

He goes on to say, in our general teaching and preaching, we seek to set forth the fundamental truths of the gospel, such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the eternal sonship, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, the eternal counsels of God in reference to his elect. And goes on to say, Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection, absolute deity, perfect humanity in one person, [00:20:03] perfect efficacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin, the operation of the Holy Spirit, eternal security of all true believers, the entire separation of the Church, and calling, standing and hope from this present world. And so on, contending for the faith.

And there we have it.

And just to take three instances of statements which came under my notice, which I haven't taken the time to detail or bring with me, I could quote similar statements from James Packer, an Anglican, late Martin Lloyd-Jones, who was a non-conformist, or going back to Puritan times, Thomas Goodwin, the leading independent of that time, [00:21:01] no doubt in general reading. A host of others could be found, so that in drawing attention and standing for these fundamental truths, we're not doing anything different than what other saints in present times and in previous times have done. Again, in 1878, J. N. Darby was asked by the editor of a French newspaper, Le Francais, to say something about what the Brethren believed.

And he says, I hold, and I can add that we firmly hold, all the foundations of the Christian faith, the divinity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, one God eternally blessed, the divinity and humanity of the Lord Jesus, [00:22:01] two natures in one person, his resurrection and his glorification, his atoning sacrifice, his present priestly work. Other truths are connected with these, such as the miraculous birth of the Saviour, who was absolutely without sin. He says, anyone who would deny

one or other of these fundamental truths would not be received amongst us, and anyone who being amongst us adopted some doctrine which would undermine one or other of these same truths would be excluded, but only after all proper means to bring them back to the truth had been exhausted.

For although these are dogmas, we hold them as essential to living faith and to salvation, and to the spiritual Christian life of which we live as born of God.

[00:23:03] And then he goes on to say, but you wish, sir, to know not only the great first which we hold in common with others, but also what distinguishes us from others.

What a field of truth we have. Those distinctive truths that are held in common by all true Christians.

Sola Scriptura, the word of God alone.

Sola Fides, by faith alone.

Another thing I think that we need to emphasize in this day in which we live is the creatorial glory of God. God as creator.

Because the idea of evolution completely sets aside God and shuts him out of his own creation. As to God's creatorial order, man and woman have a special place, a special role.

[00:24:08] God's order in marriage, for this cause shall the man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife.

The sacredness of marriage, in view of the widespread immorality and fornication and adultery that characterizes the world in which we are found. God's order in creation, especially in the jury of the corruption. Jude deals with the acts of the apostates. He deals with corruptions. He deals with angels that left their first estate. Homosexuality, things being allowed and sanctioned by legislation and by governments which are abhorrent to the mind of God and to right Christian sentiment. So there's this creatorial order of God I feel should have an important place in our teaching and in what we contend for. And also the distinct role of man and woman. [00:25:04] The creatorial order reflected in the assembly. The woman is the man and the head of man is Christ and the head of Christ is God.

There are so many truths that we need to take a stand on in contending earnestly for the faith. Special truths that have been recovered to us which are essentially Paul's doctrine. Take for instance the place that the Lord's Supper has in our majesty. The time was when in Roman Catholic teaching it was turned into a sacrifice. They had their altar and the priests really created God, turned the body and blood into, turned the wafer, turned the element into the host, into the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord. [00:26:07] Terrible teaching, false teaching.

And in the Reformation the altar was displaced by the pulpit. Go to Calvin's church in Geneva, St. Peter's Cathedral and look around. It's a very plain building, devoid of statues and images. Anything really that would take your attention away. From the pulpit, the pulpit is greatly preaching of the word of God. We've learned that the disciples come together in the first day of the week. The Lord's table, the Lord's Supper has its place amongst us. Calling and hopes, the Church of God. Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, dispensational truth. There's much truth.

[00:27:03] And it says here that we are to contend earnestly.

We have to be in earnest about it.

And it's the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

Once and for all delivered to the saints. Where is it found?

It's found in the Holy Scriptures. I want to refer to a verse in 1 Thessalonians 5, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. And verse 15.

You might read from verse 14 just to get the scope of Paul's teaching.

[00:28:07] Even verse 13.

Where he says we are bound to give thanks always to God. Because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation. Carried here from eternity to eternity.

In the past God has chosen us to salvation.

In the present there is the sanctification of the spirit.

And there is the belief of the truth. In the present we are called by the gospel. And then the whole sweep takes us from eternity past right through to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. To eternity future.

[00:29:02] From eternity to eternity.

Then the conclusion for this present time is therefore brethren. Stand fast and hold the traditions or the instructions, the teachings which you have been taught. Whether by word or our epistle.

We are told to do two things here. In keeping with what we have endured. We are to stand fast and we are to hold fast.

I don't know if any of our brethren that have links with the Caribbean have ever experienced a hurricane. But this is the figure here. Maybe been out in a gale of wind in a force 8 or a force 9 or in a board ship when it is blowing up a storm and you go out on deck. You have to hang on. When you are walking against the wind you have to dig in your feet. [00:30:06] Not to be swept off your feet. In the spiritual realm that is what we are called on to do. We are to stand fast. At the end of occasions it says having done all to stand. To stand the ground. It says we are to hold fast.

We are to stand fast. We are to hold fast to the truth. In all the storms of opposition and in all the storms of adversity. So we need in a similar way to stand firm for the truth. Which was once and for all delivered on to the same. It's not the tradition of church fathers.

It's not councils.

It's not precedent tradition. [00:31:04] None of these features.

We don't go back to the practices of the early church to the 2nd and 3rd century. We don't go to what has been the pattern and the practice over long numbers of years. The guide for us is the book of God. It's the word of God just as in the Thessalonians they were to stand fast they were to hold fast. The instructions which have been taught and Paul says are epistles.

He is writing to the Thessalonians. It's the 2nd letter to them and he says to hold fast to what I told you in the 1st epistle. It's not epistles it's singular. It's an epistle. It's a reference to the 1st epistle. And so we're commended there to the instructions of an apostle. And we're commended there to hold fast to apostolic rights. [00:32:02] We don't have apostles with us today. But we do have their teachings. So we're to hold fast to the word of God. And we're to earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered on to the saints. It's here for us dear brethren. Let's take heed to it. Let's seek to stand for it. We've dealt with who has to contend.

We've dealt with what it is to contend, what it is not, and what it is. And what it is we have to contend for. And I wanted then to give some examples for our encouragement which we find in church history. I'm thinking particularly of Luther who had arrived at the great truth of justification by faith for himself. A single man found peace with God and sought then to teach it to others.

[00:33:08] He was deeply saddened to find that the taxer came along selling indulgences, the idea that as soon as money in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs. Special permit or indulgence from the Pope that if you gave a certain amount of money, you could get out of purgatory and you could get into heaven by money, by work. And of course, as a consequence of that, he nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. And he started to write certain things which really demolished the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. And in due course, in 1521, he was called to appear before the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles I, at the Diet of Worms, an important congress, an important parliament, an important meeting of princes and grandees and rulers, pretty well the all-known world. [00:34:06] And of course, also present the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Luther had already been expelled, excommunicated by papal bull.

His writings had been burnt and they determined that he should not even escape with his wife. And there he stood before the Emperor, before all these people.

On the second day, after a night of prayer, he was asked to recant. He was asked to repudiate what he had put in his books. And he stood and he said, here I stand.

I can do none else. I cannot, I will not recant.

Help me God.

He stood.

But he stood alone.

[00:35:05] There wasn't anyone there to stand with him. And that's a question for us, dear brothers and sisters. In a day of apostasy, in a day of corruption, in a day when truth is assailed, are we prepared to stand for the truth? Even, if need be, if we have to stand alone.

That was the challenge then. We know the result. Through his standing, the German princes took up

his side and the Reformation spread. The truth of the Gospel has gone out subsequently to untold millions.

An example there, a question for us.

If we had to stand alone, are we prepared to do it? You know, Paul was faced with this at the close of his life. [00:36:02] He stood before Caesar, the Lord's prisoner, standing for his truth.

The end of 2nd Timothy says at my first answer, No man stood with me, verse 16, but all men pursued me.

But then he goes on to say, The Lord stood with me.

We need the Lord's strength to stand.

Timothy was told to keep that good thing which was given him. The good deposit, the bon dépôt, the deposit of truth. From Paul it was handed to Timothy, and Timothy was instructed to teach, instruct others, faithful men who would be able in due course to instruct others. And he was to keep that deposit. To keep that good thing. But it wasn't in his own power. [00:37:01] He wasn't capable of doing it in his own strength. And so he was told, keep through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would help. Similarly here, Paul was alone.

No man stood with him, and yet he could say, The Lord stood by me.

I want to come now to a slightly later period and mention the example of William Tyndale. His life's work was to translate the scriptures, the New Testament, from the original Greek into the English language.

And when he conceived of this great project, he went and he spoke to his brethren about it. His brethren in the Anglican Church did clergy, and they weren't ready for it.

They said, we don't need to do anything yet, just wait. [00:38:02] They weren't prepared to act.

And Tyndale had to become an exile.

He didn't have the support of his brethren, so he had to go elsewhere. He went to the continent, he went to the Spanish lowlands. He moved about because he was in constant danger of his life. He moved in the blocks of typesetting, the press. And in 1526, his New Testament, 1525 or 1526, his New Testament appeared.

The basis of our own authorized version today, nine-tenths of Tyndale's work, is incorporated in our King James New Testament.

Also, he set the pattern for all future Bible translations, for the fact that we have a tremendous heritage of Bible translation [00:39:04] and of translation in our English language.

But you know, if Tyndale had waited for his brethren in England to act, we wouldn't have this in our hands today. Certainly not in the manner in which it has come about. He had to find fresh ground

where he was free to act. He had to find new territory. But he was prepared to take that stand.

He was prepared to act.

There's an example there for us. Let's move then to the 1700s and consider William Carey, a cobbler, repairing shoes.

While he was doing it, he had atlases and maps in front of him, [00:40:04] and he was reading books at the same time, and his burden was world mission to heathens, pagans, in their need of the gospel.

He had this desire to reach out to them, to bring the truth of Christ to salvation. But you know, when he mentioned it to his brethren in Northampton, one of them said, reputed to have said, young man, when God wants to convert the heathen, he'll do it without your help.

He didn't get any encouragement.

His brethren weren't prepared to act. But thankfully he persevered. He was prepared to act.

He followed the call, path of duty, responsibility to God, [00:41:02] and in 1793 he left the shores of England for India, never to see his homeland again. And after 40 years labor, when he died in 1834, he translated the Bible, or parts of the Bible, into 34 Indian languages.

He translated complete Bible into six languages. He translated the New Testament, complete New Testament, into 23 different distinct languages.

He laid the basis in Bible translation for those Bible translations that are used to this day on the Indian subcontinent.

[00:42:07] A country of one billion people. And here was the man, the instrument used, that set that work agone, put the scripture in people's hands that others could use subsequently. And not only so, by his example, the Baptist missionary society, subsequent missionary societies that were formed, reached out, thousands of others followed his example, reaching out to others. The point I'm making is, when he wanted to set out with this work, when he felt the call to action, when he felt that there was something necessary to be done, his brethren discouraged him.

Thank God for India, the foreign nation, he persevered.

We have these examples of those in the past. There are many. We could cite many from the pages of Holy Scripture, [00:43:05] from subsequent history. I just want to refer, in closing, to two others, and particularly to Archbishop Cranmer, the man, the individual who probably did most to bring about the Reformation in the Church of England. Someone who came into a position of responsibility during the reign of Henry VIII, and he was of such a heavenly bent of mind and so otherworldly in his disposition that Henry always protected him in the midst of all the intrigues of court. In the midst of all that was happening around him, he was still preferred. He brought about modest Reformation during the reign of Henry VIII and when Edward VI came to the throne, he carried it out in a much more thorough manner. But then, in the inevitable reaction under Mary, [00:44:02] he was one of the chief ones to be arraigned. He was arrested, but the Roman Catholic authorities used all the intrigue they could. Platterton, instead of being in prison, he was housed and he was fed lavishly and given kind

treatment until they extracted a confession from him and he signed a document renouncing his teaching.

Not content with that and not living up to promise that he might preserve his life thereby, they were determined to make a public example of him and burn him at the stake.

So there was vast concourse on the day in question in Oxford. After the introductory speech, someone preached a sermon and then it was the opportunity when [00:45:01] this worthy old man, former archbishop, stripped, dressed in rags, was about to be publicly humiliated.

He was to stand up and confess her allegiance to the See of Rome and announce all the teachings that he had stood for in introducing the Protestant reform. Instead of that, he stood up and he proceeded to condemn the doctrines of the Church of Rome as false and to affirm the truth of the Bible and the truth of the Reformation. There was absolute consternation, pandemonium broke out, but in the midst of it he said the thing that has troubled my conscience most of anything in word or deed that I have done [00:46:01] has been to sign this confession, this renunciation of faith. He said, for as much for as much as this hand is responsible in acting contrary to my heart may God bring me to the fire it shall burn first.

And sure enough they hurried him to the stake, they lit the fires and he held his hand in the fire, in the hottest part of the fire until his hand was consumed and crying Lord Jesus receive my spirit he was taken from this earth. So that like Samson in the house of the Philistines in the day of his death he accomplished much good [00:47:01] what was going to be a victory for the Roman Catholic Church where Satan overstepped himself God intervened and caused a good outcome.

There was someone contending for the faithful what blessing has that for us today? We are not likely to be burned in the flames but the question is this perhaps we have put our hands to something some document some statement that troubles our conscience well there is the possibility to renounce it there is the possibility to change it or there is the equally opposite danger perhaps some statement needs to be made in regard to God's truth we are not prepared to put our hand to it [00:48:01] we are not prepared to sign it think of these examples the other one I thought of was Jim Elliot one of the young men that were martyred in taking the gospel to the Indians in South America and his words were to gain what he cannot lose and he laid down his life for the Lord it is necessary for us in different ways to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints to take our stand on God's truth on those important aspects of truth which may from time to time be questioned who shall prepare himself for the day of battle may God help us to contend for the faith in order that we might build up ourselves [00:49:01] in our most holy faith it says of Paul that he kept the faith at the close of his life he kept the faith there are times when we need to contend for the faith but it is surely in order that we might be built up that we might be encouraged, that we might be edified that we might have the enjoyment of God's truth together in common may God bless his word to us as we sing perhaps in closing hymn number 374 Go labour on spend and be spent by joy to do the Father's will it is the way the Master