Be on the Alert. Stay Awake.

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] You may recall that last week we closed our lesson with a quote from the Gospel of Mark.

! In verse 37 of chapter 13, Mark tells us to be on the alert. Other translations warn the church to stay awake.
Don't slumber. This is not a time for the church to sleep or to slumber. And so we're rapidly approaching the conclusion of our study of this short one chapter, 25 verse, inspired book of Jude.
We have examined some in-depth warnings that Jude has for the church concerning apostates and false teachers.
They were a problem in Jude's day. They are an even greater problem in our day. In this day and age, there are apostates running mega churches or mega ministries.
[1:29] They own television stations. They run multi-million dollar enterprises sucking billions of dollars from God's people.

As Jude predicted, they've been a plague and a blight on the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
And Satan is the one that is always behind the apostates in every age.
Let me just give you two modern day examples out of hundreds of possibilities. In running an apostate church enterprise.
In my opinion, one has to be Andy Stanley in Atlanta, Georgia. He has an umbrella, a large church himself, but there's eight total churches that meet that are his.
And he'll even fly to some of them in a helicopter. So he controls eight churches. They have a combined membership of 43,500 people.
[2:47] Andy Stanley is an apostate. He preaches a false gospel. And having been raised by his father, the late Dr. Charles Stanley, he should know better.

Now the largest so-called mega church in America is Lakewood in Houston. Houston, Texas. Their attendance is approximately 50,000 people in a week.
Their apostate pastor is Joel Osteen. His late father, John Osteen, was fairly solid. We would have not agreed with everything, but they were of such a nature.
He would have been welcome here to open us in prayer or whatever. And Joel should know better because he grew up hearing his dad. I still remember the time Joel was having one of his many appearances on Larry King Live, who's now dead.
And King said rather dramatically to Joel, said, Now you're not saying that to go to heaven, you must believe in Jesus, are you?
[4:13] And Joel's answer, I still remember it, was, No, no, no. I would never say that. I lived in India with my father.

And there were millions of Hindu people that love God. And actually there are millions of Hindu people that hate the true God.
And persecute. And persecution is on a rabid increase. We cover India at VOM. So Jude has been very adept at warning us about such men as these.
And there's a lot more. I'd pick those two out. But we have one area yet to examine. And we're going to do so as we approach the end of our study.
Let me read these inspired words again. We've been reading this throughout. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you, exhorting you that you contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all handed down to the saints.
[5:24] That's the third verse. And here again is the command to contend for the faith. And we're to do so earnestly.

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It even uses that word. That's a Greek word, by the way. The meaning is this is worth struggling for. That's what that means.
And this is in the form of a command. But we need to make sure we know how to contend for the faith. And Jude proceeds to tell us what we're up against.
He says, this is in verses 17 to 23. But you, beloved, must remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you in the last time there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts.
These are the ones who caused divisions. These are the ones who caused divisions. Worldly minded. Not having the spirit.
[6:56] But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith. Praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And on some who are doubting, have mercy. And for others, save. Snatching them out of the fire.
And on others, have mercy with fear. Hating even the tunic polluted by the flesh.
So how do we respond to Luke's command to contend against ungodly forces that are arrayed against us?
And how do we contend with these forces that are arrayed against God's church? See, Jude understood something.
[7:59] It's one thing to be warned. But we have to have a plan of action. It's one thing to do something when the tornado sirens go off.

But you have to have a plan of action. And I can't hear them where I live. But in any event, we need a plan of action.
Being in Oklahoma, we're often warned about approaching storms. Of course, that's not the time to get out our lawn chairs and sit in the yard and catch a glimpse of the funnel cloud.
I've never tried to watch a funnel cloud from my lawn chair. But I have stood out on my porch and watched them. A guy is yelling at me to get inside. Cut out the foolishness.
We all need a plan to protect our families and ourselves. And that means taking appropriate action. When it comes to apostates, we need a plan.
[9:03] And we have to take the appropriate action to guard ourselves, to guard our families, and to guard members of our church, which is our family.

We're even responsible for protecting the unsaved in the church, so that they will not be exposed to erroneous teachings and be led astray.
We need the unsaved to come to our Lord and Savior. Now, for our own protection, we must apply the spiritual armor Paul talked about in the closing chapter of Ephesians.
I'll read it to you. You've heard it a hundred times. Ephesians 6, verse 10-17. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.
[10:36] Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day. And having done everything, stand firm.

Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, also receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
That's our armor. Now, not everyone takes up their armor, so we must be willing to come to the aid of others in the church.
This will take courage, and it will take discernment. And that means we must be able to distinguish between truth and error.
That's essential. Unless we understand what true faith is, we're not going to be able to contend for the true faith that has been handed down to us.
[12:08] Now, the people in Jude's day knew there were counterfeits in the church. They knew this. And they also knew that they needed spiritual discernment to deal with them.

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In our day, the church has largely ignored this, and may I say, paid a very high price for that ignorance. Paul understood the desperate need for true discernment.
He understood this. I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Paul said that, not me. But indeed, you are bearing with me, for I'm jealous for you, and I have a godly jealousy.
For I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I'm afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.
[13:34] For if one comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we've not preached, or you receive a different spirit, which you've not received, or a different gospel, once you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

2 Corinthians 11, verses 1-4. It reminded me of his first chapter in Galatians, where twice he said, you're going to be anathema if you follow a different gospel.
There is no different gospel. It doesn't exist. There's only a true gospel and a false gospel. Paul knew that the church at Corinth lacked discernment.
And they were ripe for infiltration by apostates and by false teachers who would spread their deception.
The core problem was that they were tolerant of error. They didn't want to offend anybody. Boy, that's rampant in the church today.
[14:49] They didn't want to offend anybody, so they threw the doors wide open to any and all teachings, including those of the apostates.

This is the same indictment one could level at many churches today situated in the West. Now, by that I mean Western Europe and North America.
You can just about, not quite, but you can just about write Canada off. They've gone through some amazing problems. The contemporary church has also lost its will or its desire to discern error.
What are the reasons for losing discernment? Well, the first one was the abandonment of doctrine.
Doctrine is the foundation of all church learning.
It's what we learn from Scripture. Doctrine is the glue that holds us all together. But we live in an age where doctrine is not just ignored, it's ridiculed.
[16:07] Literally ridiculed. The loss of discernment of true doctrine has ushered in an era of what I call easy believism.

It's no longer take up your cross and follow me. Those are words of Jesus. Now it's repeat these words after me and you'll go to heaven and you don't have to worry about it anymore.
Second is the church's willingness to substitute error for truth. People are comfortable substituting the absolute truths found in God's Word for a relativistic, whatever feels good at that particular moment approach to preaching and teaching.
So the Bible has gone from being black and white to mostly gray in a lot of people's minds. In our day, this aberrant approach to Scripture has been manifested in the willingness of many churches, even in the evangelical camp, to be soft on issues like abortion, to embrace homosexuality, and there's so many other things we could mention.
I'm going to say this. I'm not going to hit this hard. I promise you. When you step into the election booth, don't leave Jesus out.
[17:51] Okay? Don't leave Him out. Read the Scriptures. When Don Coleman was our pastor, most of you didn't know him, but many of you did.

He said, if you want to know who to vote for, get a copy of the platform of both major parties and read them. And he said, you'll know who to vote for.
He never told us who to vote for. But he said, you'll know who to vote for. Third, the church has lost its ability to discern.
How has this happened? By failing to believe in the sufficiency of Scripture and the sufficiency of Christ. The Lord Jesus has all of the answers for all of life.
the contemporary church has lost this and in its place substituted plans and programs that will see the church through in all circumstances.
[19:03] Fourth, the church rejects the Bible as the solution to everyday problems. pastors. This category is related to number three and a product of it.

The church's current lack of discernment stems from her refusal to properly study, interpret, and apply the teachings of Scripture to everyday life.

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It is easy to blame the pastors, but the laity has made little demand for the correct handling of God's Word.
For years, those of us in Southern Baptist life assumed that if a man was a graduate of a Southern Baptist seminary, he had to be solid. There was a time we believed that here.
And we woke up one day and realized that some of our seminaries had abandoned truth. And it was a shock.
[20:06] It was a shock to our system. Some of our seminaries back years ago had abandoned truth for relativism.

God raised up certain men to rescue us from the encroaching liberalism that was about to take over. And fifth is the breakdown of biblically driven discipline in the church.
Wickedness arises in any church that turns a blind eye to sin and particularly sin that's occurring within the church.
And sin and heresy must be confronted and not ignored. And it is never to be swept under the rug.
Any church that ignores sin within its walls will also ignore the breakdown of holiness among its people.
So we can't allow that to happen. And sixth, and don't panic, I only got six. Six is the loss of desire to pursue spiritual maturity.
[21:24] The church in the 20th century and now the 21st has become content with some vague expression of faith among its members. They are declared saved but it stops there.

True salvation which comes from God and is not a prayer prayed by rote is the first step to a new life.
Once we are saved, we become reborn babies and we should desire the milk of the Word. We can transition later into meat. We start out like a baby does with milk.
Hebrews 5, verse 12 to 14, For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
[22:49] So as the Scripture says, this takes practice in order to have our senses trained to discern between good and evil.

And that's where the church today has largely failed. we should be engaged in a lifelong pursuit of spiritual growth and the Bible has a name for that.
It's called sanctification. If a person is not being sanctified, recreated to be like Christ, there is every reason to call into question their salvation experience.
Go back to the beginning. They need to heed the words of Paul in the second letter to Corinth and examine themselves just to make sure they're legitimate believers.
It should be the goal of our church to honor Christ by worshiping the Father in spirit and in truth.
[23:56] It's what Jesus told the woman at the well at Sychar. We're here to honor the God that has been revealed to us through scriptures. To do that properly, we must adopt and exercise spiritual discernment.

We must know how to distinguish between truth and error. And we do that by knowing scripture.
And that takes a lot of effort, guys.
more than spending thirty minutes or an hour or two at church every week. We need people digging in to the Word of God on a daily basis.
We must be serious about this. if we're not, we're failing to contend before we even enter into the battle.
So the question is this, how do we specifically contend for the faith that has been delivered to us?
Well, I'm going to tell you next time as we finish out our study of the great book of Jude.
[25:22] Let's close with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for your word. Your words have met the test of time.

They never fail us. though we may fail many, many, many times in our walk. Your word never fails us. Your spirit never fails us.
Your son never fails us. You never fail us, Father. We live in contentious times, Lord. Frightening times. But you're with us, walking with us.

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May we march to that banner of Christ. And Lord, may we be pleasing in your sight. We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.

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