

Onward Christian Soldiers

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[0:00] We are rapidly approaching the conclusion of our study of this short one chapter inspired book of Jude.

! And we have examined some in-depth warnings that Jude has for the church concerning apostate and false teachers. They were a problem in Jude's day and they are a greater problem in our day. In our day we have apostates running mega churches. They own television stations and run multi-million dollar enterprises. Take in billions of dollars from God's people. And Jude predicted that these men would be a plague and a blight on the true church of the Lord Jesus until Christ returned.

And Satan we know is behind the apostates in every age. And Jude has been very good at warning us about such men. But we're going to examine an area tonight and perhaps even in our concluding lesson talk about it. But this is how we started weeks ago. I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. So here we have a command to contend for the faith and to do so earnestly. I'm told that in the Greek language that means it is something worth struggling for. That is the command and we really haven't gotten into how yet we're going to fulfill that command. Although we've had nine lessons. In part this is where we're headed this evening.

Beginning in verse 17. But you beloved ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ that they were saying to you in the last times there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts. These are the ones who caused divisions, worldly minded, devoid of the spirit.

[2:39] But you beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping yourselves in the love of Christ, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus to eternal life, have mercy on some who are doubting, save others snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

So how do we respond to Jude's command to contend earnestly against the ungodly forces that are arrayed against us, against God's true church?

And Jude understood something. It is one thing to be warned, but you must also have a plan of action. Now, being in Oklahoma, in the springtime we are often warned about the approach of severe storms or tornadoes.

But that is not the time to get out our lawn chairs and sit in the backyard in the hopes that you'll catch a glimpse of the funnel cloud. Personally, I've never tried to watch a tornado from the lawn chair, but I have stood on my porch and watched it while Diane's yelling from the storm cellar, get in here and close the door.

So we need a plan to protect our families and ourselves, and that means taking the appropriate action. Now, when it comes to apostates, we have to take the appropriate action to guard ourselves, guard our families, and guard the members of the church.

[4:33] Quite frankly, we're even responsible for protecting the unsaved in the church so that they won't be exposed to erroneous teachings and be led astray. We want them on a path where they will one day realize their need for the Lord Jesus.

Now, for our own protection, we really need to apply the spiritual armor Paul talked about in the final chapter of Ephesians. Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might.

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 powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm.

And of course, Paul goes on there for several more verses and I would encourage you to read that. This is our armor. Not everyone takes up their armor and when we have brothers that don't do that, we have to be willing to come to the aid of those in the church that are not picking up their armor.

[6:04] And I'll tell you, that takes courage and discernment. We must be able to discern between truth and error unless we really understand what the true faith is.

We're not going to be in the business of contending for the true faith that has been handed down to us. We've got to know what it is. The people in Jude's day knew there were counterfeits in the church.

Just think, 1900 years ago or more. They also knew they needed spiritual discernment to deal with them. In our day, many in the churches around the land and in the West especially have largely ignored this.

And they've paid a high price for their ignorance. Churches in entire denominations have been taken over by apostates. We've got apostate churches in this town.

We just do. It's a simple fact. Paul understood the need for true discernment. 2 Corinthians chapter 11. I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness, but indeed you are bearing with me for I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.

[7:24] For I betrothed you one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and the purity of devotion to Christ.

and then a very famous passage for if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached or you receive a different spirit which you have not received or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

You've got to bear down. Same words in the first chapter of Galatians. People will come to you and preach another gospel. Now Paul knew something.

The church at Corinth lacked discernment. I'm always amazed that there's churches today that build their whole theology on the Corinthian letters.

The church was a mess. They were ripe for infiltration by apostates and false teachers who would spread their deception. The core problem was that they were tolerant of error.

[8:38] They tolerated error. They even let a man in the church that was sleeping with his mother or mother-in-law. We're not sure. What a perversion. They didn't want to offend anyone.

They were politically correct. Does that term sound familiar? So they threw the doors of the church open to any and all teachings including the apostates, the false teachers.

And we can level that indictment today to many churches in the West meaning Western Europe which is largely dark. Not been there. The lights have really gone out.

And in North America. The contemporary church by and large has lost its will and its desire to discern error. Now why?

What happened? How does the church or denomination get to that point? First is the abandonment of doctrine as the foundation of church learning.

[9:36] There's one man that I know very well and said, we don't teach doctrine. It's divisive and boring. Let me tell you something guys. Doctrine is the glue that holds us all together.

We are who we are because of the doctrines laid out in the Word of God. But we live in an age when doctrine is not just ignored. It's ridiculed. The loss of discernment of the true doctrine has ushered in an era of easy believism.

It is no longer take up your cross and follow Jesus. It's repeat these words after me and if you do you'll go to heaven. That's kind of the new theology.

So abandonment of doctrine is number one. Second, the church's willingness to substitute absolute truths found in the Word of God for a relativistic whatever feels good at the moment approach to preaching and teaching.

If it feels good it must be from God and it must be right. Of course that's not the test is it? The Bible has gone from being black and white to a lot of gray in a lot of churches.

[10:53] 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 for instance on abortion to be soft on easy divorce and to embrace homosexuality.

You know we kicked this off last summer remember with MacArthur's tape on we will not bow based on the Supreme Court ruling recently and the tape's worth watching over and over.

There are other issues but those two capture the headlines. Abortion homosexuality. Third, the church has lost its discernment by failing to believe in the sufficiency of Scripture and the sufficiency of Christ.

Everything we need is in the Bible and in Christ. He is all sufficient. The Lord Jesus has all the answers for all of life. The contemporary church has lost this and in its place adopted plans and programs that they think will see the church through in all circumstances.

And it just didn't so. The fourth 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 properly interpret and properly apply the teachings of Scripture to everyday life events.

[12:27] whatever circumstance you find yourself in there's an answer for that in the Scriptures. And it's easy to blame this on pastors but I'm telling you guys people in the pews have made little demand for the correct handling of God's Word.

Denominations haven't insisted that their seminaries teach the proper handling of God's Word. Now for those of us in Southern Baptist life and I remember when I came in 1980 there was an attitude that if a man was a graduate of any one of the six Southern Baptist seminaries he had to be solid. Well we found out one day we woke up and it wasn't true. We realized that some of our seminaries in those days had abandoned truth for relativism.

And God raised up some great men that rescued us from unbelieving liberalism. We were almost the Episcopal Church of Nashville.

We came extremely close to that. We should all be like the Bereans in Paul's day. Paul preached and the people of Berea went home and said we better search out the Scriptures to see if what he said is true.

[13:51] that's what God asked us to do. You should develop a Berean attitude. The fifth reason for the lack of discernment in the church is the breakdown of biblically driven discipline in the church.

Most churches discipline is politically incorrect. Politically incorrect. Wickedness arises in churches and many churches will turn a blind eye to sin within the church.

And the church is called upon to confront sin and heresy within its walls. And it will also ignore the breakdown of holiness among people.

And again part of that is the political correctness of our day. And we sort of turn away from that. We don't. We deal with it. The sixth reason is the loss of desire to pursue spiritual maturity.

The church in the 20th century and now in the 21st century has largely become content with some vague expression of faith among its members.

[15:05] They are declared saved but it really stops there. Now true salvation which comes from God and not some prayer prayed by rote is the first step to a new life.

Once we are saved we become reborn babies and should desire first the milk of the word and transition to meat. Hebrews 5 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 to discern good and evil this takes practice in order to have our senses trained to discern between good and evil and what do we learn that we learn that in the word of God we learn from God so this is where the church has largely failed we should be engaged in a lifelong pursuit of spiritual growth that the

Bible calls sanctification if a person is not being sanctified meaning recreated into the likeness of Christ there's every reason to even call into question their salvation experience I would tell a person go back and examine yourself Paul said that make sure you're on sanctification road the instant God saved you you were justified a judicial declaration of innocence by God how can God do that he's God and he declared you innocent of all sin if you're one with Christ but that's just the beginning we treat that often as the end of all things it's not the end of all things it's the first step then you are placed on what I call sanctification highway and we are to travel that highway our entire life until we go to the Lord or he comes back for us and let me say to you we all travel at different speeds don't criticize!

somebody because you're way out travel at different speeds the key is though that we're moving forward now in my life there's times I took two steps forward and one step back there's also times I took two steps forward and three steps back but generally my progress has been forward and I hope it accelerates because I don't have as much time left as some of you young guys and I want to stand before the Lord having done all that I could to be sanctified by the way it's a lifelong pursuit you won't arrive Wesley thought you could arrive in this life and on his death bed he said I never arrived glorification comes after death when we see Jesus but we should be engaged in a lifelong pursuit!

spiritual growth and the Bible calls that sanctification we really need to heed the! words spirit and truth this is what the Lord commanded in John chapter 4 we are here to honor the God that has been revealed to us through the scriptures and to do that properly we must adopt and exercise spiritual discernment you've got to know how to distinguish between truth and error when your children or grandchildren come to you with questions you got to be able to answer them and trust me in this day they will come with questions

[19:34] I talked to one of my officers today who happens to be a believer and his daughter has gone to a liberal university somewhere and she has rejected every foundation they ever tried to lay on her because her college professor says there is no God your faith is bogus you know the whole we've heard this right you got to give them that foundation firm I'm writing a song how firm a foundation been working on it for years we can distinguish between truth and there by knowing scripture and let me just tell you that goes far beyond an hour or two a week at church we're talking home guys we're talking home we're talking on your faces before the Lord which we'll probably be talking about that in January when we start afresh we need to be people digging into the word of God on a daily basis we've got to be serious about this if we are not we are failing to contend before we even enter the battle you know the first thing I do when I get up in the morning

I move stuff out of the bedroom because I shower upstairs and get dressed up there so Diane could sleep I take this weapon out of the drawer and I get out in the hallway I close the door and I go like this and I barely crack it on open I want to make sure there's a round in the tube last thing I do before I go to sleep if someone breaks in I want to make sure there's a round in the tube I'm serious about being able to enter into battle apply that spiritually apply that spiritually So the question for the faith that has been delivered to us and not only contend but earnestly contend well the church was issued that command 2000 years ago nearly 2000 and that contending is supposed to go on until Jesus comes back and whether that's in our lifetime or down the road or a thousand years from now the church on earth is to be in the business of contending we're never told to stop contending for the faith until we are with Christ so contend is the command now we've got to fulfill it how are we going to be contenders and first thing we have to do we must remember simple word we must remember beloved sorry Jude 17 and 19 but you beloved ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ that they were saying to you and the last time there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts these are the ones who cause divisions worldly minded devoid of the spirit now you might say well you know if I really knew we were in the last times then I would know that mockers were coming but I don't know if this is the last time well

John told us it's the last times he said you know how John worded! 2000 years ago we're in the last hour that's how he worded it if John was in the last hour 2000 years ago we're in the last seconds aren't we?

trust me this is the time where mockers are coming and are here following after their ungodly was the first step to contending is for the church to remember we must remember that false teachers pose a constant threat to the church as a whole and to individual members and men let me say if the evil one can't have you he'll settle for your wife he'll settle for your children or grandchildren he'll settle for your parents you've got to remember the warnings the threat was present in the Old Testament all the way back to the beginning of Adam's family the threat touched the early church and the threat is active today it will remain active until the Lord Jesus returns for his bride apostates have always plagued

[24:28] God's people and we should not be cut off guard when they appear in our fellowship don't be cut off guard when the holy spirit commands us to remember he is referring back to the words of Christ and the words of the apostles it was Christ who first warned new testament believers of the danger posed by apostates in Matthew 7 15 beware of the false prophets who come to you in

sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves now note how dangerous these apostate false prophets are they appear to the church as gentle sheep they're sheep no one has ever had to fear a sheep they're gentle they're the most gentle of animals but the Lord of the universe offers a stern warning those who appear as sheep are in reality ravenous wolves they're wolves that are starving and they're wolves that want to devour anything and anyone that they can and thousands have been devoured by those guys

I read a statistic years ago I don't know how it is now but 265 people leave southern Baptist life every day for a cult that's not a modern statistic but I read it 20 years ago maybe worse now I don't know well the apostle Paul's message is no different 2nd Corinthians 11 but what I am doing I will continue to do so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be guarded just as we are in the manner in the matter about which they are boasting listen to the guys that he's talking about for such men are false apostles deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ no wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness whose end will be according to their deeds one of the main cults in the world the books that support that start out I was in the woods looking for the true religion I was enveloped in darkness and God appeared to me as an angel of light that's how that book starts who did he just describe Satan Satan Satan came and visited the other apostates were just as strong in their warnings concerning false teachers and apostates the message repeated by Christ and the apostles was that false teachers will infiltrate the church and oppose the truth revealed in scripture they are described as mockers who follow after their own ungodly lust they set out by design to cause division within the church you add in the fact they're worldly minded they have no Holy Spirit because they're not saved and you can see why we have to be on guard we have to be we're standing on the wall protecting the church and that's especially the role of the leaders and we're the leaders in here guys or you wouldn't be here you wouldn't be here another thing we have to do is remain in addition to remembering we are commanded to remain

Jude 20 and 21 but you beloved building yourselves up on your most holy faith praying in the Holy Spirit he's giving you some commands here building yourself up in the holy faith praying in the Holy Spirit keeping yourselves in love of God waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life as believers we must exercise discernment to protect ourselves our family and our church from apostates we exercise discernment by remaining on that path of sanctification that I said earlier remaining in sanctification means that we are to build ourselves up in the faith we do that through spiritual growth by building a firm foundation of doctrine we talked about that to guard and guide our lives through the consistent intake of God's holy word we talked about that that's how vitally important it is so the first element in remaining in sanctification is through the study of God's word then applying what we learn in daily living you gotta apply guys the second element of remaining in sanctification involves praying in the

Holy Spirit we are to pray the will of God for our lives where do we find that and it's not oh God I think it's your will I win the lottery you know that's not we're talking about and this point is vitally important you are to know what the word of God teaches through the consistent study of the Bible and you are then to pray for those things that we know are consistent with the will of God because they were revealed in the pages of his holy Bible you can turn to almost any of the New Testament books beginning in Romans and you have a field to harvest of commands of the Lord that you can pray I did that once I can't remember if it's Philippians or Colossians but there were like 31 verses and 32 commands and they're not burdensome Jesus said they're not hard they're easy to do but we pray the scriptures so what is prayer it is a form of submissiveness to God and it's worship and a form of submissiveness it involves the entire

[30:59] Godhead Father Son and Holy Spirit we're also to keep ourselves the Bible says in the love of God that is a way of saying that we remain within the sphere of God's blessing found in the Bible it is through obedience that we receive back from God we are to be obedient to what we learn during the sanctification process we're also to wait anxiously for the mercy of Christ that will be revealed in his second coming we are to greatly anticipate the return of Christ first for his church then for his earthly return to establish his kingdom on earth prophecy is really important I love to study it I am not a date setter I don't know if the Lord will be back tonight or 10,000 years from now I think we're closer to tonight than we are 10,000 years from now but that's my personal feelings but what should the study of prophecy do lead to greater holiness if you and I live our lives realizing we

could be in the presence of the Lord in one more second that changes a lot of things doesn't it your prayer life your church life your home life with your family so remember and remain we're also to reach out

Jude 22 and 23 and have mercy on some who are doubting save others snatching them out of the fire and on some have mercy with fear hating even the garment polluted by the flesh unbelievers in the church pose a great threat when they come under the teaching of a false shepherd they don't have any foundation do they they built a foundation on sand but there's a great oxymoron here because the same unbelievers also are a tremendously great mission field within the church for the spread of the gospel Billy Graham said once the most fertile mission field in America is the church rolls I mean just a few years ago Mike we had like 12 1400 on our church roll we finally you know a lot of them had died a lot of them had moved on we finally started cleaning that up a little bit I don't know if we need to do it anymore or not I'm not sure where we stand Jesus identifies in those two verses three categories of unbelievers in the church and they could be both a menace and a mission field the first is that of the confused have mercy on some who are doubting let me tell you a false teacher or an apostate lives to confuse people and where did that all originate garden of Eden Genesis chapter three hath God truly said every lie starts from there this was the plague of the Corinthian church false teachers confused them this confusion led to doubts about what exactly to believe concerning the Bible and these are the very people we are to have mercy on those who are strong must guard the weak from the ravenous wolves showing mercy does not mean being tolerant of their false beliefs that's political correctness that's just political correctness it means leading them into truth leading them into truth we are to be meek and patient with them but we are to lead them from darkness to light that's what it's all about and also

Jude talks about the convinced save others snatching them out of the fire the idea here is one of rescue Christians are to be in the business of rescuing unbelievers but the task mentioned here is especially difficult because we are called upon and mark this down your mind we are called upon to rescue people who have been convinced of the message of false teachers that's who we are called upon to rescue they have been exposed to false teachers they are buying in and we come along we are trying to snatch them out of the fire now God of course is the one who saves!

I mean you have heard so many it's applied to so many people I don't know if I heard Campbell Morgan I've heard just all kinds of guys of the drunk that walks up to him and says I'm one of your converts and he says you look like one of my converts you know but I don't think you're one of God's God is the one who saves but you know what this is so!

[36:06] amazing he does so by using his people truth to those who need it and that's everyone so everybody's a candidate for truth right James understood this James 5 19-20 my brethren if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude!

of sins! Powerful verse of scripture and that word snatching I'm told is very strong in the original language it means to seize someone if necessary by force lay hold of them we rescue people from apostates by showing them how false and eternally damning their message really is and then Jude talks about the committed and on some have mercy with fear hating even the garment polluted by the flesh this is an example of reaching out to those who are committed to the teachings of apostates members of course would be a good example they are deceived people deeply committed to their deception we're to show them mercy with fear there's always danger that we can become polluted with their false beliefs 30 years ago

I had a family church great people save people weak they were just babes on milk and they knew that and the Mormons came calling and they sent a couple of elders I guess they're all elders and Kenny Smith asked me to come over Jim Byers and I went over there on a Saturday what a lively time we had and for three hours got nowhere finally I asked the head Mormon elder I said if you were to die and stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and he said to you Joseph Smith was wrong what would you say he said I looked him in the eye and said you're wrong wow and I turned to Kenny and I said I think it's time that we just call all talk and get them out of your house and that's what we did don't become polluted with the garment of flesh now since I'm just the messenger here let me tell you what that passage says be careful when you handle their dirty underwear that's what it's saying we should avoid spiritual defilement with the same zeal as the church we must deal wisely with spiritual contamination if we don't it can spread throughout a church so we handle those polluted by false teachers in such a manner that it can result in their salvation and you know we live

in a day don't we when you don't have to have a false teacher walk in here and start doing that we'll shut him down quickly if we find out about it

Monday through Saturday they can get it filled up so we handle those polluted by false teachers that can result in salvation we ourselves must stay focused on our own personal Bible study prayer and obedience as we anticipate the return of Christ lastly and perhaps most difficult we've even got to reach out to apostates and try and pull them out of the judgment fires of God so we are to witness to both apostates and their victims fellows the Christian life is a pilgrimage it is filled with spiritual battles but I've read the end of the book and there is triumph there is triumph I believe the great writer the writer of the great hymn onward

Christian shoulders understood that I will not sing it but onward Christian soldiers marching as to war with the cross of Jesus going on before Christ the royal masters leads against the forward into battle see his banners go at the sign of triumph Satan's host does flee on then Christian soldiers on to victory hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise brothers lift your voices loud your anthems raise how ironic that about a week ago a denomination issued an edict to their churches they were not to sing that song because it's too militaristic too militaristic but still but but