

Contend Earnestly for the Faith

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[0:00] When I got married, it must have been 10, maybe 15 minutes in, and I discovered that it was a lot easier to ask for forgiveness than permission, and I've lived by that creed.

So I come tonight seeking forgiveness. Not going to be in 2 Timothy tonight. Don't have a handout for you tonight.

But what we're going to talk about does dovetail with or agree with Timothy. Paul's been dealing a lot in there with false teachers and false prophets and the church under assault, and Titus is going to do the same when we get there.

So I have fudged a little bit, and we're going to be in another part of the Bible, but it's going to agree with Paul because the Holy Spirit wrote both.

And I might even get you out here a little early. Let me see. I'm leaving for Texas here in the morning. We have been warned by Jude of the grave danger that the church faces and has faced throughout the generations, even millennia, because of the infiltration of apostates and false teachers into the church.

[2:06] They were prevalent in Jude's day. They are epidemic in our day. They're all over television. And Jude warned us of these things.

And Jude, by inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit, issued a command that the church through the centuries was to obey.

And because of the epidemic mentioned, it is vitally important that the church in our day obey this command.

I can't understate that. You know, I was thinking about this, and I got this mental image of Jude, that he was all excited because he was going to write a book on salvation.

And he got writers bought. You know, he'd write a little bit, he'd wad that up and throw it. Because that's not what God had in mind for him.

[3:15] Instead, God says, Jude, I want you to give the church a command that will stand time. It'll be in force until Jesus comes back.

And it is for today, but it's also for the 21st century. Because we have been swept up in an epidemic of apostasy, particularly in the West.

By that, I mean the Western, Western Europe, West Canada, America, Australia. And in fact, entire denominations have, in essence, disappeared.

Certainly as a force for the kingdom of God. And we all know the story that at one time, our denomination came dangerously close to be swallowed up by a great apostasy.

And godly men rose up, including Brother Don's mentor, I would say, Adrian Rogers, rose up and stood for truth.

[4:26] So what is this command that we are to fulfill even down to the 21st century? It is contend earnestly for the faith. We are to be contenders for the faith.

The church got that command about 2,000 years ago. And we are to contend as the church until Jesus returns. We're never told to stop contending until we are with Jesus.

And I want to say to you that the church of the Lord Jesus is in a fight. We are locked in a battle for truth. Dr.

MacArthur and others call it the truth wars or the truth war. We are, we have arrayed against us forces, both visible and invisible.

The fight we are in for truth is part of a larger battle that we refer to as spiritual warfare. It has been going on for millennia.

[5:36] From God's perspective, this fight originated in the hallowed halls of heaven when an exalted angel, the highest created being in the universe, named Lucifer, declared that he was going

to be more powerful than God himself.

From the human perspective, the war began in the Garden of Eden when Lucifer, who by then was called Satan, appeared to our original parents and planted a seed within the minds, in their minds, that God's word, which we refer to as truth, could not be trusted.

And they bought into that. And all lies have flowed from that encounter. Our parents, Adam and Eve, chose disobedience, sin, and rebellion in the Garden that day, and it polluted the entire human race with a sin nature that affects everything we do and think, even down to the subconscious level. And it still impacts believers because we live in unredeemed flesh. And we war. Boy, do we ever. This attack on truth has taken an unfathomable toll on the human race.

Billions have perished either without the knowledge of the true God or having rejected the knowledge, even rejected the light that they've been given and ascribed what they see to natural processes or evolution or whatever.

[7 : 28] Billions more have a twisted and false view of God. But the most devastating attacks have come from within the church by people who at least vocally would claim to know God, love God, believe in God.

And this is one of the reasons, maybe the principal reason, it is so difficult to defend against error. It often occurs maybe by the person sitting next to you in church on Sunday morning because you don't know really what they might believe.

Well, we have been commanded to guard the truth that God has delivered to us from the apostles. And I don't think we do a very good job of that.

I'm not talking about anyone in here. I think in the West we seem to have kind of not done a good job of that. Jude told us the problem and it is today I think the greatest danger facing the church. he said in the fourth verse certain persons have crept in unnoticed. I guarantee you Paul would have told Timothy that. And then in verse 12 he said these men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts they feast with you.

[8 : 57] They might even in some churches yesterday have sat down and had Thanksgiving dinner with true believers. so I think we can get a sense of the danger spoken of here.

They crept in unnoticed. They are like hidden reefs that can destroy even the largest ships and these destroyers these reefs that are hidden under the surface are within the church.

They have control of boards and committees and even denominations. they refer to themselves as Christians but have neither salvation nor the Holy Spirit. This statement that they have crept in unnoticed is quite instructive.

In the original language it carries with it the idea that they were able to sneak in without being detected. It means to sneak in secretly but all the time with an evil intent.

Having an evil heart and an evil intent. I think I told you last time the problem with apostates when they leave the faith they don't leave the church. You know if I'd be better if they're going to leave the faith leave the church.

[10 : 14] Now it is one thing for an enemy of Christianity to rail against our faith from the outside. I heard a video watched a video of President Obama doing it and I can talk about him tonight because Oscar's not here but it was interesting because he was railing against basically the church the Bible mocking the Old Testament and in fact he made a comment I remember he said Abraham went up on this is your president Abraham went up on the mountain with Isaac and was ready to slay him and supposedly God said you know stayed his hand and President Obama said he should have immediately been arrested for child abuse.

I mean he's not saying that with spiritual eyes to say the very least. so it's one thing to have people rail against us from the outside but these evil people do it from the safety of the church role.

Note also Jude refers to them as certain persons it is a rather vague description we don't know who they are specifically they don't wear kind of like the scarlet letter remember I didn't read it but the girl next to me read it so I wasn't worried about the test and you know they don't carry around a sign that said apostate coming through.

They give a rather vague description we don't know who they are specifically but we do know that they are operating in churches and the Bible calls them apostates.

The theologian Thomas Manton said they are like a worm inside a body bent on destroying the very body that houses him. Jesus viewed them as wolves in sheep's clothing they are so dangerous that Jesus Peter Paul and John warned us about them and so does Jude.

[12:19] They come in many forms they have a lot of names they are all bent on destroying the Lord's work they were bent on destroying the work Paul had done and was passing off to Timothy their views are called go by Gnosticism Nicolaitanism Modernism Cultism Liberalism and Antinomianism I think we talked about some isms yesterday we could of course come up with a lot of other names as well religions Hinduism Buddhism Confucianism Mohammedism we could go down the list but the first thing we must be on guard against is the apostate because they do their work by infiltration the Lord himself knows them and has already marked them out for condemnation their end has already been predicted in fact scripture says this Jude 4 in total for certain persons have crept in unnoticed those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only master in Lord Jesus Christ

I found out the hard way if you have a sentence that says who turn the grace of our Lord God into licentious the computer wants to put a question mark there and it doesn't belong there so I really fought that computer over this from the opening days of redemptive history God has promised to judge apostates there is no doubt they will be judged with the greatest of severity in fact the Greek construction indicates that their destruction was ordained ages ago Jude refers to this destruction later in his letter with these words in verses 14 and 15 it was also about these men that Enoch and the seventh generation from Adam prophesied saying behold the Lord came with many thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to convict all of the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him all the way back to nearly the beginning of mankind the Old Testament prophets predicted the destruction of the apostates and that was in keeping with 2 Peter chapter 2 verses 3 to 6 in their greed they will exploit you with false words their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep for if God did not spare angels when they sin but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness reserved for judgment and did not spare the ancient word but preserved

Noah a preacher of righteousness with seven others when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter final judgment of apostates is certain and unalterable so how does God picture these apostates whether in Jude 2 Timothy Titus wherever he says this they are ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Lord Master Jesus Christ and the leading trait of an apostate or false teacher in any day was their ungodly character they claim to belong to God and to speak for God but scripture clearly says they are far from him

Jude tells us in light of God's description that we conclude that their character conduct and creed are always corrupt there is always corruption I think Jesus told the Pharisees you are full of dead men's bones and all types of corruption you are like a tomb whitewashed on the outside but inside corruption stinks like a grave some of the specific characteristics of apostate and it's important because as members of the Lord's church we have to be able to identify them this was Paul's message to Timothy be on guard they are in your church you have to be able to tell who they are because they are in our midst and you don't want to fall under their sway and the first thing he talks about is their character he says they are ungodly persons well that's pretty I told the VOM board Saturday one of the reasons I'm not doing a Timothy deer I had to do a devotion there

I found out about a day and a half ahead of time they are ungodly persons Jesus had a way of saying what he meant and meaning what he said it is impossible for an ungodly person such as a false teacher to worship properly such a person does not have a high view of God they do not hold him in reverence the early church fathers wrote about such men describing them as those who play at religion while having no fear of God or love for him they pretend to be spiritual leaders but they are the enemy sent within our borders to wreak havoc on the church they claim to know God and speak for him but their sinful character undermines them what about their conduct they turn the grace of God into licentiousness that's another mark and mark this thought down false spirituality cannot restrain the flesh false if you have a false system of being spiritual it can't restrain the flesh flesh is powerful unredeemed flesh in us is powerful boy don't you think

[18:34] Madison Avenue knows that and Hugh Hefter knows that it's powerful apostates have no ammunition with which to deal with fleshly fallen desires I have great conversation with my Armenian friends and I said wait a minute do you think you can begin in the spirit and complete this

in the flesh we leak all over if we're not walking in the spirit we leak all over false teachers consistently indulge the flesh in manners that are sinful one need only look at the fallen high profile television preachers who have succumbed to sin no true minister of God would ever use God's grace as a license to sin yet we've seen this repeated over and over among high profile ministers they're in it for what they can get out of it they get huge mansions fast cars faster women they're into jets and rose voices and they name universities after themselves remember the admonition of Paul in Galatians you cannot begin in the spirit and have any hope of finishing in the flesh the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the lure of sin are far too strong we live in unredeemed flesh and we will battle sin our entire lives on this planet

I sometimes cry out to God in frustration Lord I'm camped out in Romans 7 get me to Romans 8 I just cry out our hope is to begin in the spirit and finish the same way lean on him well they have a creed and here's their creed they deny our only master and Lord Jesus Christ false teachers believe they answer to no one they are their own masters you'll never find an apostate preacher or teacher preaching about the sovereignty of God or the lordship of Christ those are the two furthest things from their mind this passage says they will not submit to him as master and lord master denotes sovereign ruler lord is king and owner false teachers never give to Christ the honor that is due him they deny his rightful position in the godhead

I'm not suggesting you even watch these guys it's poison but if you ever do see them they use a personal pronoun I and me a whole lot I've done this and I've done that and me me me they never give Christ the honor to him and they deny him his rightful position in the godhead Christ is both god and messiah but the apostate teachers will not acknowledge this this is confirmation that they are counterfeit teachers and preachers ceded into the church by the enemy and Paul had this to say in Titus 1 16 which will be in probably in the latter part of January they profess to know god but by their deeds they deny him being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed again says what he means means what he says and again I told you I'm going to kind of draw to a conclusion at least on this point we are a strong church doctrinally we're strong we're being fed doctrine we're being fed the word of

God in expository preaching and I can't imagine sitting under any other kind of preaching it doesn't mean we know all truth nobody has it all remember former member David Ray there's probably one or two guys that know that name David was teaching and I slipped out and went upstairs and one of the pastors said do you know everything there is to know about the Bible I said no but I know everything David knows and I really probably didn't but that was my excuse but we are called to guard the truth to guard the truth you know that presupposes something if you're going to guard something you got to know something about it don't you if we're going to guard the truth we got to know the truth I told you before secret service agents learn how to pick out counterfeit money by knowing what the real stuff looks like we can tell a false teacher not because we want to study what they teach but because we read that book we know that book and then when they come with a false teaching we can jump on it so whoa whoa that's not what the word of

God says doesn't say that we're to know it we're to live it in that regard we are to accumulate for ourselves preachers and teachers that hold to strong doctrine but these facts mean that we may be at greatest risk Satan has little to do with churches that are already in his clutches I used when I was a new believer I thought Satan camped out in bars nightclubs and found out he's already got them he's camped out in churches he wants those who oppose him and preach the word of God to stop so we must be strong and vigilant as we live out our lives in the 21st century