

# Standing in His Strength!

## Jude 17-25



Between AD 60-62, Jude wrote to believers living outside Israel proper, urging them to compete, vie, or strive for victory on behalf of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (vv. 1-3). False teachers, about whom Jude says are not even Christians, have crept into the congregations. Their intent is to spread the spiritual virus of immorality as they reject Christ's authority (vv. 5-16). In vv. 17-25, Jude gets to the point of his letter by telling the churches how they are to combat the false teachers:

**GOD WANTS US TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH BY KEEPING OURSELVES IN HIS LOVE.<sup>1</sup>** Jude didn't say to contend for the faith by torturing the false teachers, followed by a public execution. Nor did he say to contend for the faith by burying the heretic alive beneath the blogosphere. "The war we wage is the war of saving the heretics; not eliminating them." Our primary strategy to defeat false teachers comes from who we are as the people of God—we are the "beloved." The best argument for the faith is when the saints live it. That's why Peter says, "*Be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence*" (1 Peter 3:15). The way you contend is as important as the content of your arguments. You can win with your logic and lose with your life. Question: when you send an opinionated e-mail to someone or mail a "letter to the editor," do you value your "1<sup>st</sup> amendment" right more than you value speaking truth in love? How do we keep ourselves in God's love?

## Remembering what's most important

Jude reminds us that Jesus must come first. Period. "Behind every personal sacrifice is a quest for some kind of treasure." Jesus makes it absolutely clear that to be his disciple requires absolute, undivided allegiance. "*Any of you who does not give up everything He has cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:33). Jesus said this because he knows that all of us worship something all the time. The human heart is an "idol factory." And the trajectory of one's life will always be contingent on the treasure that's in one's heart. The Gospel must be our greatest treasure—because it's the only treasure that lasts forever. In vv. 20-21, Jude implies the Trinity when he urges us to: (1) Stay in God the Father's love; (2) Build yourself in the faith as you pray in the Holy Spirit; and (3) wait [with certain hope] for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ. Note also the faith/hope/love triplet.<sup>2</sup>

Prayer is what we do to acknowledge that Jesus is supreme. Praying in the Holy Spirit means that our prayers are in the power and confidence of the Spirit; and under the guidance of the Spirit (Romans 8:26-28). Here is a powerful prayer: "Father God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who do you want me to love today? In Jesus' name, Amen."

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<sup>1</sup> Jude's outline is very simple: What? Contend for the Faith (vv. 1-3); So what? Because false teachers exist! (vv. 4-19); Now what? Contend for the Faith by keeping yourself in God's love (vv. 20-25).

<sup>2</sup> Jude asserts that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ will mean different things depending on your relationship with Jesus. For the enemies of Christ—judgment. For the Christ's Church—mercy.

## Reaching out to those who doubt

Just as Jesus rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transplanted us into His kingdom; so our mission as a church community is to reach out to those who have been confused by wrong-headed teaching. “*Have mercy on those who doubt.*” Mercy is what the Christians are wished in v. 2; mercy is what they will receive when Christ returns (v. 21) and mercy is what they are to give. Can you hear the patience that Jude wants God’s people to have to those who question or feel skeptical about Christianity? Just because someone doubts doesn’t mean they’re a heretic.<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis once wrote:

I think the trouble with me is lack of faith. I have no rational ground for going back on the arguments that convinced me of God’s existence: but the irrational deadweight of my old skeptical habits, and the spirit of this age, and the cares of the day, steal away all my lively feeling of the truth, and often when I pray I wonder if I am not posting letters to a non-existent address. Mind you I don’t *think* so—the whole of my reasonable mind is convinced: but I often *feel* so.

Jude echoes the heart of James 5:19-20, when he urges the church to “*save others by snatching them out of the fire.*” He’s talking about the “*fire of judgment*” (Read Zechariah 3 for a cross-reference). His point is that we need to be more assertive about helping people see the peril of living without Christ; and especially the people we know! Jude’s not talking about becoming an obnoxious street corner preacher—he’s talking about summoning up the courage to say something to the one who has lost their love for Christ. If we don’t, who will?

## Remaining careful when you help others

At the same time, Jude cautions us as Paul did (Galatians 6:1). The garment in v. 23 refers to the long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin. “The false teachers have been soiled by the body’s excretions to suggest the contaminating effect of their sin on everything around them” (Bauckham).

Sin is deceitful enough that those trying to help others could themselves be trapped. We cannot rescue people without personal contact and we must be cautious that what seduced them must not seduce us. We can accept a person without accepting their sinful action. (Davids)

## Doxology

Keep yourselves, knowing that God is keeping you! Your efforts will not be fruitless or in vain because of God’s power to support and hold you! In an era of pagan Roman deities, Jude declares the sovereign reign of the One triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Jesus demands everything, not just so that we will submit to His control, but to free us from the control of things that were never designed to control us. . . . Question—what are you holding onto tightly? Where are your knuckles white?” (Tripp)

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<sup>3</sup> Doubting in Jude 22 is different than doubting in James 1: 6—where you know the good you are to do but waffle in doing it.