

Fight For The Gospel Daily
Jude 3-4; 20-23
Sunday, August 16th, 2015
By Ryan Perry

Jude 3-4:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 20-23

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Let's Pray

Introduction:

The Olympic Games, Mexico, 1968. The marathon is the final event on the program. The Olympic stadium is packed and there is excitement as the first athlete, an Ethiopian runner, enters the stadium. The crowd erupts as he crosses the finish line.

Way back in the field is another runner, John Stephen Akwhari of Tanzania. He has been eclipsed by the other runners. After 30 kilometers his head is throbbing, his muscles are aching and he falls to the ground. He has serious leg injuries and officials want him to retire, but he refuses.

With his knee bandaged Akwhari picks himself up and hobbles the remaining 12 kilometers (almost 7.5 miles) to the finish line. An hour after the winner has finished Akwhari enters the stadium. All but a few thousand of the crowd have gone home. Akwhari moves around the track at a painstakingly slow pace, until finally he collapses over the finish line.

It is one of the most heroic efforts of Olympic history. Afterward, asked by a reporter why he had not dropped out, Akwhari says, **"My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish."**

Akwahari's words stuck with me as I read this story. They stuck with me because I was convicted by the reality that I am lazy and often unwilling to struggle and fight for the things that are important in my life. I am often unwilling to put in the work needed to finish what at one point I was excited to start.

I will start an exercise program only to find it fizzling out after a few weeks, or I keep trying to get up at 5:00am only to find myself hitting the snooze and then getting up closer to 6:00am. I set aside time for the Lord only to see the busyness of life and my lack of discipline eat that time away. I can easily start something but I often fail to put up the fight necessary to finish.

This is something that I also see in the culture around us. 40-50 percent of marriages end in divorce within the first 7-8 years. On average an American worker stays in their job for only about 4.6 years, and this is seen as staying too long by some. Basic friendships on average only last for about 7 years, and only half of students who attend a college actually finish.

When it comes to the church, people on average change churches every 3-5 years, pastors change churches about every 3 and a half years, and about 70 percent of young people within the church drop out after high school.

Whether inside or outside the church the hard truth is that we as a people often lazy and are unwilling to fight and struggle for something when it either seems hard, becomes routine, or doesn't fit perfectly with what we might desire for our lives.

This is also true in our walks with Christ. Many of us started out strong in our walks with Christ only to reach a place where our Christianity is now routine, boring, and often lifeless.

Instead of being consumed with the amazing life changing reality of the gospel and what Christ has done for us and wants to do through us, we are consumed with jobs, family, finances, homes, vacations, retirement, sports, nice yards, etc...

We have stopped fighting and struggling to know our God, and our relationship with Christ is stale and joyless. **As a result, many of us have also stopped fighting for holiness, and have let the door open for the devil and sin to get a foot hold in our lives.**

But this morning I want you to know that the word of God calls us to something bigger and and more magnificent.

God, speaking through Jude, is calling us once again to a vibrant relationship with Him, and is calling us to fight daily for our faith, meaning that He is calling us to fight daily to believe and apply the gospel to our everyday lives.

And my hope this morning is that you will leave with a renewed desire to fight for your relationship with Jesus, a renewed desire to fight sin and walk in obedience to Christ, and with a renewed sense that your joy is found in Christ and in Christ alone as we run, like John Stephen Akwahari, toward the finish line of an eternity with Christ.

With that said, I have one big truth to convey from Jude 3-4 this morning, and then I have 5 implications that flow from that out of verses 20-23. So let's dive right in. Our main point for this morning is this:

We must fight to believe and apply the gospel daily. (V. 3-4)

Jude 3-4:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude had originally meant to write to this church about their common salvation, meaning that he had hoped to write and encourage them with the truths of what Jesus had done for them and with the reality that there is a great eternity waiting for them when He returns.

However, Jude couldn't do that. Instead he found it necessary, or another way to say it is that he was compelled to write and urge them to *"contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."*

Now the image of contending for something actually means to fight or struggle. In fact it is the same word used in 1 Timothy 6:12 which says:

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

So when Jude calls them to contend for the faith he is calling them to struggle and fight for the faith with their entire being. But what does Jude mean when he says "the faith?"

Now it might be easy to think that Jude is calling this church and us to work hard at trusting God as he calls them to have greater faith.

But when he mentions "the faith," Jude is referring to a specific set of beliefs that was once for all delivered to the saints.

And the beliefs that we are talking about are the truths of the gospel that were delivered from Jesus, to the apostles, and then to the entire church.

The gospel that tells us that we are sinners before a holy and just God.

The gospel that tells us that Jesus died in our place as a substitute and took the wrath of God upon Himself so that we would not be punished, but would be called children of God who have been saved to walk in submission to Christ, and to find our forever joy and life in Him.

This is the truth that Jude is calling us and this church to fight for. And this urgent exhortation from Jude was an important one for the church he was writing to because they got lazy and let false teachers in who were using God's grace as a license to sin.

Literally, their words and actions were denying Jesus as their Lord and Master, and as the one who rules their lives.

They had not only compromised their beliefs, but had compromised their lives, and were trying to lead others away from Christ as well.

And if we are not careful we can easily get lazy and not only let false teaching into our church, but we can also let it creep into our lives.

Now some of you might think, "but I would never do that, I would never compromise my beliefs and openly walk in rebellion to Christ" yet maybe you don't even realize that you already are.

Maybe you don't realize that you stopped fighting for the truth of the gospel a long time ago.

Maybe you stopped passionately pursuing a vibrant relationship with Jesus, or maybe you stopped applying the truth of the gospel to your finances as you decide to hold back from God, or maybe you stopped fighting for the truth of the gospel as you live in unrepentant anger, pride, envy, or sexual sin.

Maybe you've have stopped applying the truth of the gospel in your marriage which calls you to selflessly serve your spouse, yet you are selfish and are always at odds with them.

Maybe you've stopped applying the gospel at work as you slack off and have a bad attitude and gripe about your boss instead of taking joy in your work while doing all things to the glory of God.

Maybe you've stopped fighting for the truth of the gospel in your family and don't put the truths of God's Word before your wife and kids.

Maybe you are so consumed with worry and doubt, that people might questions whether or not you even believe in a sovereign and all powerful God.

Maybe you're in a place where you've don't really care whether or not you live for Jesus and you've given up living for Jesus at all. The struggle was too hard, or the routine of a life with Christ was too mundane so you stopped running the race toward the finish line all together.

Wherever you are this morning I want you to know that God is calling you to take up the fight once again.

He is calling to you to fight for the belief that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that nobody comes to the father except through Him, **and He is calling you to stand on that truth in a way that actually leads to repentance and holy living.**

As Jesus says in John 14:15:

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

This means that if we desire to call ourselves Christians and we say we love Jesus and believe the gospel, we need to fight by His power to walk in obedience to the truth of His Word.

And this is not just something that we are called to do without joy, but Jude tells us in Jude 24 that it will result in our joy.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

So not only will Jesus keep us from stumbling and falling as we fight to believe and follow Him, but awaiting us at the finish line is **"great joy."** How many of you here this morning want "great joy?" I do, and I hope you do to.

But there is more. God does not just want us to clench our jaws while we trudge through our lives lifeless, as we wait for the joy that will come when Jesus returns.

No, He also wants us to have joy now even as we walk through the struggles and trials, and as we fight for our faith and for our holiness.

As it says in Colossians 1:11:

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,

So as we struggle to believe, apply, and live out the truths of Christ, and we endure in our faith, we will not only receive joy as we finish the race, but God will even give us joy in the process..

So then, how do we fight to believe and apply the gospel daily? I believe that Jude gives us 5 things that we are called to do.

1. Read God's Word and Pray. (V. 20)

Jude 20

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

Now I can imagine that the air was just let out of your sails. I can imagine that you were hoping for something more exciting than just read your Bibles and pray.

But these are the basic staples of the Christian life that God has given us for growing in our knowledge and love of our savior.

Because the truth of the matter is that if we don't read God's Word and get to know Him, and if we don't pray and talk to God, why would we ever be compelled to follow Him.

It's God working through the daily, seemingly ordinary practices, of Bible reading and prayer that make us more like Christ and to grow within us a love for Him that then compels us to follow Him.

So when people tell me that they are struggling to believe and follow Jesus it is usually true that they don't spend any time with Him.

But a vibrant relationship with Jesus starts as we spend time learning about Him, hearing Him speak through His Word, and seeking Him in prayer.

These are the pillars of a fruitful walk with Christ.

2. Walk in obedience to the Word of God. (V. 21a)

"...Keep yourselves in the love of God..."

As I have said in the past I realize that for some of you the word obedience can be hard for you to hear because it brings up in your mind the idea that we are somehow trying to earn favor with God.

But that is not what Jude is saying. In fact, he opens and closes his letter with reminders to this church and to us that we are keep by God.

Jude 1 says:

"To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:"

And again, verse 24 says:

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,"

Both of these verses speak to the reality that it is God who keeps us, protects us, and sustains us.

This means that all glory in our salvation, our progress in faith, and in our enduring in faith are Christ's and Christ's alone.

However, this does not diminish the fact that we are empowered by God to walk in obedience to His commands. And not only are we empowered by God to do so but we are commanded to do so.

In fact this is one of the areas where Jude is calling out the false teachers. They say that they believe Jesus, but they are actively denying Him and walking in sin. They refuse to obey His commands.

And if we refuse to fight to obey God's Word then we are not only going to miss out on a joy-filled relationship with Jesus, but we may come to a place where it becomes clear that our faith was never genuine in the first place.

Now is it going to be hard to seek Jesus every day? And is it going to be hard to make choices that are always in-line with His word and will. Absolutely! And will there be days where you feel like a total failure as you mess up, once again, and fall into sin? Absolutely!

But remember, God is not looking for perfection, for He is the only one who is perfect.

But what he is looking for are men and women of God who will fight the daily battles for their faith realizing that the fullness of life and joy are found only in Him, no matter how hard our circumstances get.

The question is, are you willing to fight for it?

3. Set our hope on an eternity with Jesus. (V. 21b)

“waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”

In the daily grind of our lives it is so easy to get caught up in what is happening in the seemingly urgent matters of our work and family. This means it is very easy for us to get distracted from following Christ.

Knowing that, it is important for us to continually set our eyes upon the eternity that will one day be ours.

It is our distant finish line that keeps us going when everything else presses in upon us trying get us to forsake our first love. In this way it is the fuel that keeps us running toward Christ even when we want to stop and give up. As Paul writes in Colossians 1:3-5:

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

So the Colossians hope was the fuel for their faith and their love for the saints.

And as we look to an eternity with Jesus we are able to endure with Christ through the hardest trials because we know that something better and grander awaits us on the other side of this life. And it is this eternity that is far greater than anything we have or will ever experience in this life.

So fight for the gospel by setting your hope on the finish line; our eternity with Christ.

4. Invest yourself in the local body of believers. (Verse 22-23a)

“And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear,”

We are all called by God to protect, build up, and care for the body of Christ.

We do this as we bear each other burdens and are merciful to one another, but it also happens as we help each other see our sin more clearly. And when we do this we are helping people to root sin out of their lives and we are strengthening God's church.

But this only happens if we are willing to give of ourselves and invest our time and energy into the local body. You can't just be a Sunday attender and expect to really help God's people grow, nor can you expect to have others help you grow,

But when you invest in people's lives, get involved in the work of the ministry, and open your life up to others for examination and correction, you are strengthening God's church.

And there will be great joy when you see God's people, and yourself, being conformed to image of our savior as we await His return and live in a holy community that is a magnificent foretaste of what awaits us in an eternity with Christ.

So invest yourself and fight to protect God's people.

5. Hate Sin. (V. 23b)

"hating even the garment stained by the flesh."

If we truly want to seek God by the power of His holy Spirit and we believe that we are kept by God through Christ. as we seek to walk in obedience to Him, **and if you are excited about the eternity that is waiting for you with Jesus then you need to hate sin.**

Sin is why Jesus died on the cross. Sin is why He bore the wrath of God on our behalf. He hates sin and cannot mix with it.

Likewise, if we want all of these things to be true of our lives, then we need to have a hatred for sin, realizing that it does not bring the utmost glory to God.

But we also must realize that when we let sin (even little sin) go unchecked in our lives, we are robbing ourselves of a full relationship with Christ, meaning that we are robbing ourselves of joy.

So again I implore you to hate sin and fight for your full joy.

Conclusion:

So my hope this morning is that you are not disappointed that I did not have a miracle pill for how you can fight to believe and apply the gospel every day.

But I do hope that you are encouraged by the fact that the daily grind of Christianity is what God uses to change us little by little over time as He conforms us to the image of Christ.

And I believe that if we seek to fellowship with God through His Word and prayer and if we seek daily to walk according to His Word, setting your hope fully on an eternity with Him, while investing in the body and hating sin, we will see God transform our hearts, marriages, families, jobs, all avenues of your lives, in a way that will be for His supreme glory and for our everlasting joy.

The question remains: are you willing to fight the daily battle for the gospel? And are you willing to not only start the race, but finish as well?

Let's Pray