CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1:1-25

Key Verse: Jude 1:3b “I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”

The title of the message we will share this morning is “Contend for the faith”. What the title means is that we must fight for our faith. Faith is a good thing. When you have faith, you can do great things and overcome difficulties. Faith pleases God (He 11:6). However, such good faith is not just given from outside, and even if once we have faith, it is not maintained continuously in our hearts.

In a world of full of sin and temptation, it takes effort to keep faith, and this effort must be revealed as the good fight of faith. I pray that we all may be able to live a life of faith that can be victorious in the good fight of faith.

**Part 1: God’s mercy and the sin and doom of ungodly people**

Look at verses 1 and 2. Verses 1 and 2 read, “**1**Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: **2**Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.” Jude introduces himself as a servant of Jesus and a brother of James. Who is James? He is Jesus' brother. Therefore, Jude, the brother of James, is also the brother of Jesus. Jude must have grown up calling Jesus his brother from a very young age.

One day, his brother called himself the Christ. At first time he thought his brother was out of his mind. However, by witnessing the ministerial works of Jesus and above all, by meeting the risen Jesus who overcame the power of death, Jude became a servant of Jesus.

This Jude writes a letter wishing God’s mercy, peace and love to the Christians who are called and loved by God and preserved for Jesus Christ. The world needs mercy. This is because many people deceive, abuse, and exploit others. They initiate wars and commit all kinds of crimes. Rather than being compassionate with people, they trample on the weak. That is why there are so many people who are dried and twisted in their hearts as they strive not to be trampled on.

In this situation, our true hope and resting place for healing is found in only Jesus. When we seek, believe, and depend on the love of God revealed in Jesus, we can be healed and strengthened in that love.

Look at verse 3. “**3**Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”  You could find that Jude was very eager to write about our salvation. How good and wonderful is this salvation? How valuable is it to know Jesus, who has met us, who forgives us, who has led us up to now, and who will lead us to heaven although we are sick with our transgressions and cannot live fully in this world without God’s mercy?

But at the same time, the author felt an irresistible responsibility to write admonishing words to encourage Christians to fight for the faith that they had already held. It is good for the church to be rich in the grace of salvation, but as a leader of the church he felt the need to help them to fight for the spiritual growth of individuals and the church.

Look at verse 4. Verse 4 reads, “**4**For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.” Verse 4 reveals that some false teachers have entered into the church. They are ungodly people. Here, Ungodly can be thought of as its dictionary meaning, but from the text itself, it means that they, ungodly people, regard God's grace as nothing more than a license to do immorality, and deny that Jesus Christ is our Sovereign and Savior.

Then what are some concrete examples of being ungodly? Verses 5-7 refer to precedent ungodly examples from the Bible that hold precedent. Look at verses 5~7. “**5**Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. **6**And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. **7**In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”

God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them out of it, but the unbelieving generation of Israelites perished in the wilderness. When they distrusted God and complained and resisted against Him, they went into the wilderness and died in 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. As we well know, only a few believers, including Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, survived in the wilderness (Moses could not get into the Promised Land in a different reason though).

As another example, when in heaven, angels have power, but when they fail to keep their fraction, God imprisoned them in darkness and bound them under the chains of eternal condemnation until the final day of judgment. How glorious it is for the angels to have God by the side and to live as a servant of God in His authority. But the glory is taken away by God when even the angels do not keep their positions under God’s authority and become arrogant.

As a final example, Sodom and Gomorrah were cities of sexual corruption and perversion. As a result of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah ignoring God and pursuing all kinds of regression according to the desires of the flesh, God sent His servants to judge the cities. As described above, the three examples can be examples of suffering in the eternal judgment of fire.

Look at verse 8. “**8**In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.” Here ‘the very same way’ means the same way that follows disobedience and unbelief, pride and sexual depravity. The ungodly people who joined the church relied on their dreams, corrupted their bodies with the help of those dreams, ignored the authority of the church, and accumulated indirect abuses by grieving and ignoring the angels who prayed for them through their actions.

But there is someone who judges them. He is God. Look at verse 9. Verse 9 reads, “**9**But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”” Michael, the archangel, did not rebuke the devil recklessly when arguing with it over Moses' body. It is because even the archangel acknowledged that the authority of judgment rested with God. It is not right to use God's authority recklessly even for good works. But how fearful and trembling when we think about the consequences of using God's name for doing evil things and for ourselves. We cannot infringe upon God's authority.

But ungodly people behave from their own thoughts and ideas that are against God. Look at verse 10. Verse 10 reads, “**10**Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.” Knowing that God is judging them, and that nonetheless God is patient, we should be grateful for His grace and mercy. Yet ungodly people slander everything they do not understand. They act according to the indulgence of their hearts, as if asking who can stop them. They know spiritual things, but they despise authority. So then what will the result be? It is that the things that they instinctively follow will destroy them. The end of their path is suffering and destruction.

Verse 11 describes what patterns their destruction could take. Verse 11 reads, “**11**Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.” God is angry with them. Instead of God's peace and love, there is God's judgment. The way for Cain, who wandered after killing Abel, was prepared for them. Those who follow Balaam's example will have the same kind of shame and insult, and even the same end like Korah's, who was buried alive to the earth for not recognizing Moses’ spiritual authority that was given by God. That is what self-destruction is.

Nevertheless, they go their own way. Verses 12~13, and 16 well describe what they are like. Look at verses 12~13. Verses 12~13 read, “**12**These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. **13**They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.” Verse 16 reads, “**16**These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.” They are like ‘chaff that the wind blows away’(Psalms 1: 4). They are complainers and gossipers.

Then what judgment will they face? Enoch, the seventh descendant of Adam, speaks of their judgment. Look at verse 14. “**14**Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones **15**to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”” Jesus is coming with an angel of heaven to judge all people. He will judge every ungodly act they have done and every defiant word towards God.

**Part 2: A Call to Persevere**

Look at verses 17~19. Verses 17~19 read, “17But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. 18They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” 19These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.”

The present situation of the church, which Judas spoke of, was foreseen by the apostles long ago. In the last days, there will be those who mock God by pursuing their ungodly desires. These people, who do not have the Holy Spirit inside, will come into the church and do things that divide people, and follow their physical desires. It was foreseen, so there is no surprise at all. Because it's not a new phenomenon.

What, then, should believers do at such a time? We should first build up ourselves with faith and prayer. Look at verse 20. Verse 20 reads, “**20**But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,” Our faith must be godly. It should not be limited to worldly ambitions or human endeavors, or optimistic thoughts about the near future. We need to pray in the Holy Spirit, hoping for the kingdom of heaven, confident that Jesus is with us. To pray in the Holy Spirit means to pray in the help and presence of the Holy Spirit. In Spirit, we can move forward with God's help without being pressed down by difficult situations.

Second, we should protect ourselves with the love of God. Verse 21 reads, “**21**keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.” We wait for Jesus. He invites you to eternal life through his willing sacrifice on the cross, and that salvation, the invitation to eternal life, comes from Jesus' mercy, who is compassionate on sinners. In this waiting, we must keep ourselves in God's love.

Present difficulties can sometimes make us doubt God's love or harden our heart before we even recognize His love. However, when we look back on our lives, we can remember that there were many difficult situations and that God helped and guided us at every turn. It is clear that that God, God who helped with that grace, does not go far as He promises in Hebrews 13:5b (“Because God has said “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”). Thus, God is still with us. When we realize and hold on to this fact in our hearts, we can wait for what God will do.

Lastly, we should be merciful to others by protecting ourselves from the fear we have before God. Look at verses 22~23. Verses 22~23 read, “**22**Be merciful to those who doubt; **23**save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.” We don't always have godly people around us. Some people make us difficult. But even then, God commands us to be merciful to them. Then, they could see and experience that mercy, seek and meet God, and thereby be saved from the blazing fire of the hell. Also, as sinners, we must realize our sinful nature and live in fear before God so as not to stumble.

Verses 24-25 praise God. Let’s read verses 24~25. “**24**To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— **25**to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” Jesus has the power to keep us from stumbling. And he can make it possible for us to stand before God’s throne without blemish and with great joy. If we hold on to this Jesus and depend on him, if we try and strive to live before him relying on Jesus' mercy, Jesus will help us and overcome any difficulties and enable us to live confidently.

God is full of glory and honor, power and authority. He is the everlasting God who is working through Jesus our Savior in the past, present, and future. We must rely on and hold on to this Jesus. Praise God, our Savior. Amen.

As I prepare this message, I realize how great God's grace and compassion are toward me. Rather than working for God, I was in sinful and repeated disbelief and despair due to the current reality. I also find that all the warnings of the book of Jude apply to me. I pray that I may not live only for myself, but I love God, follow God absolutely with an attitude and mindset to take care for the flock God gives me, and depend on prayer and the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, God has given us salvation. Therefore, we must keep that salvation by faith. I pray that God may help us to content for our faith in God, fulfill His mission, and live a life of serving God with fear and trembling, depending on His mercy.

Amen.