

Title: **A Faith Worth Fighting For**
Passage: **Jude 3-4**
Theme: **Contending for the faith**
Number: **0913Ju3-4(3)**
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{Read Passage}

[i] Lots of things are said to be dead

I saw a bumper sticker years ago – “Fur is d.”

Fans of t/60s rock group, t/Beatles well rem. t/phrase “Paul is dead.”

In t/late 19th c. Nietzsche popularized the phrase "Gott ist tot" – nearly 100 years later some American theologians were saying t/same thing. (N. died in 1900 & most of those so-called theol. have died. G. is very much alive.)

Bible affirms a living God & warns against a dead faith (James: f. w/o works is d.).

[ii] For more than a generation we've been hearing that “Chivalry is dead” – a phr. gen. assoc. w/the courteous treatment of women by men.

The larger context of chivalry is a world of medieval knights, a world of courage, honor, contending for noble causes.

That larger context has spawned lots of lore. Arthurian stories about knights and kings.

Late 14th c. poetic narrative, Sir Gawain (*GAW-win*) and the Green Knight is one such story.

It's a tale about a knight of King Arthur's Round Table, Sir Gawain (*GAW-win*), who is challenged to defend t/honor of t/Court.

T/setting is Camelot during Christmas. King Arthur's knights are gathered around t/table in relaxed conversation.

The air is stirred when a Green Knight enters and challenges Arthur's men. Much like t/account of t/Philistine Giant, Goliath, in 1 Samuel 17, t/challenge is initially unanswered.

Green Knight mocks:

*"What! Is this King Arthur's house . . .
the rumor of which runs through realms unnumbered?
Where now is your haughtiness, and your high conquests,
your fierceness and fell mood, and your fine boasting?
Now are the revels and royalty of the Round Table
Overwhelmed by a word by one man spoken . . . !"*

Gawain (*GAW-win*) the Good rises to accept t/challenge:

"Would you my worthy lord," said Gawain to the king, "bid me abandon this bench and stand by you there; so that I without discourtesy might be excused from the table . . . and since this affair is so foolish that it nowise befits you, and I have requested it first, accord it then to me! "

He rises from t/table and beheads t/Green Knight.

1 Samuel 17 – a young shepherd boy named David answers a similar taunt when he asks, “. . . *who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?*”

There is a time to push oneself away from t/ease of t/table, to rise up and fight. // to remove t/robes of a shepherd, exchanging them for t/armor of a warrior.

There's a time to contend for a most noble cause.

That's what we see here in our text for this morning.

A warrior for truth named Jude pushes himself away from t/table, rising up to encourage his fellow warriors to contend for t/faith.

There are lots of things people will contend for (and over). Most are not so noble. Even within t/CH Xns squabble over their own honor to t/neglect and detriment of t/truth. We're not to fight against each other, we're to fight together against a common enemy:

Unlike knights and kings, t/weapons of our warfare do not consist of iron swords & shields.

I find great comfort in t/words of Paul in 2 Cor. 10 –

In answering t/charge that his ministry was self-centered, he replies:

3b For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, & we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Ours ought always be a ministry of grace and truth. Grace in that we are gracious, knowing we stand in grace – we're to be merciful to others even God has been merciful us. Truth in that we stand firm for t/truth – t/truth of t/Gospel of grace – that in t/face of all opposition.

In short, we have a faith, a body of truth, worth fighting for.

These 2 vv. (3-4) form a transition from t/opening greeting to t/body of t/letter, what follows in vv. 5-23. In these 2 vv. Jude gives us t/reason why he writes.

I. Introduction: What is Jude Talking About? (v. 3)

II. Explanation: Why All the Fuss, Jude? (v. 4)

I. Introduction: What is Jude Talking About? (v. 3)

A. Jude opens his exhortation with that familiar word:

Beloved,

1. Some translations render the noun (ἀγαπητοί) “dear friends”

Really misses t/mark. “Beloved” means more than just friendship, endearing or otherwise.

Within t/context of Xnty “beloved” refers to someone who is deeply loved by God (loved so much that He sacrificed His Son for us) and by t/brethren (we ought to so love each other that we sacrifice of ourselves).

Word pregnant with meaning.

a. Jude uses it 2 more times (vv. 17 / 20)

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord . . .

20 But you, beloved, [build] yourselves up on your most holy faith...

b. God's love ought to constrain us and captivates and control us

I have long bemoaned t/hypocrisy of love among Xns who w/their mouths say they love God and t/brethren but w/their hearts they demonstrate that their real love-affair is w/themselves.

They're smart enough to know that they can't go around saying, "I don't really love you," and dumb enough not to know that their actions deny their words revealing their hypocrisy.

Lack of true, SELFLESS (not selfish) love is not only characteristic of self-centered Xns, but also those who are in reality unconverted.

1 John 3:14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.**

This self-centered, self-love was also characteristic of those whom Jude writes about. Note t/irony of v. 12:

These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves . . .

c. This word "Beloved" can't be glossed over

Foundational – reaches back to v. 1 – remember Jude writes to those who are (what?) **"the called, beloved in God the Father, kept for JC."**

This is a loyal love that stands t/test of time and trials. You never know t/depth of love until it's tested.

Beloved, although I was making every effort to write to you concerning our common salvation,

Literally,

I was eager to write to about our common salvation

Sometimes the thing we're eager to do isn't the thing we need to do.

Jude was going to write to this local gathering of believers (in Asia Minor, perhaps) to encourage them about the salvation they share. It was going to be a letter of instruction and encouragement. However, something happened, or Jude learned of something, that caused him to change his mind.

What happened? Jude learned that the church was under attack. False teachers had crept in.

Words he uses ἀνάγκην ἔσχον γράψαι ὑμῖν παρακαλῶν
necessity to write to you this urgent appeal

Indicate a sudden/imp. change in plans.

B. Change in Plans: A Faith Worth Defending

I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

1. Here is the central theme of letter

The entire epistle can be summed up in this exhortation ==>

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

To put it in the negative:

Stand Against Those who Try to Weasel The Faith Away From the Lord's Church!

2. Isn't "contend for my faith, or a faith, or any faith"

τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει.

a. "The faith" refers to a singular body of truth – specif. the Gospel

(1) Note how the phrase is used elsewhere

It is “the faith” that Paul as Saul tried to destroy, but Saul as Paul preached (Galatians 1:23)

It is “the faith” that we're to continue in, firmly established – “the faith” that is t/hope of t/Gospel. (Col. 1:23).

It is “the faith” that t/Spirit tells us some will fall away from, turning instead to doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1)

It is “the faith” that some have wandered away from (1 Timothy 6:10)

It is “the faith” that we're to fight the good fight of, taking hold of the eternal life to which we were called (1 Timothy 6:12)

It is “the faith” that t/good servant of JC is to keep to t/very end:

2 Timothy 4:7 **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;**

Titus 1:1 TAP speaks of ==>

“the faith” *of those chosen of God -and- *the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

Catch that? [^]

b. We are to contend for, uphold, preserve, something quite specific

We're not a culture that's into specifics. Specifics & categories are exclusive. Our culture screams, “be inclusive.” “Tolerance” & “community.”

Allan Bloom writes: "Openness - and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings -- is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always

thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all." [cited by Charles Colson, *Against the Night*, p. 84.]

As t/English author Dorothy Sayers observed, "In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair, the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, ... finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die."

c. What we stand for is not open to revision

It's not "Wiki-Faith" – log in and change what you like.

It's "The Faith" with a ἄπαξι

(Child, "Did he say 'chicken pox?'" 'No,' says t/dozing husband, 'I think he said 'pox on you.')

(1) Important word and concept for you to grasp: ἄπαξι

In language we will sometimes take about a word being a hapax legomenon - or a hapax - a word that's only used 1x (1300 - 1500 words in the Heb. Bible that only occur once.)

More relevant for us, t/word refers to something that is unique and unrepeatable ==>

the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

No new rev. as it relates to t/truth of Scripture & t/faith of t/CH.

Body of truth that we call t/gospel has been once for all, finally, unabridgedly, handed down. No new rev. // new CH dogma can change the essence of t/G.: JC slain for sinners; a sufficient sacrifice for sin received by faith alone.

Relates directly to the Reformation. Luther:

“... we have learned that no one can become righteous or be justified by his own works, but alone through faith in Christ; also, that he must rely upon the work of Christ, as his chief good and only support.”

[Commentary on Jude, 291]

c. It is for this we are to “contend earnestly”

(1) That phrase / those two words come from the verb *επαγωνιζομαι*

“Effort expended . . . in a noble cause.” [BAGD]

which brings us back to where we began this am – There's a time to contend for a most noble cause.

Word borrowed from t/realm of battle, used of military engagements (combat).

Word borrowed from t/realm of sport, used of athletic competition (contending, competing).

Sometimes the verb is simply used of any intense struggle, or effort.

Translated “striving” in Romans 15:30 **Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,**

Colossians 1:29 **And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.**

Translated “struggle” in Colossians 2:1

FOR I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf ...

Translated “fight” in 1 Timothy 6:12 **Fight the good fight of faith...**

When Jude says ==> **I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.** He's calling us to “red alert.”

Red Alert / Red Alert – the siren is blaring, t/red lights flashing. Everyone to their battle stations. (danger will robinson!)

Red alert to contend for the faith. Need to be about doctrinal precision.

(2) Begs the question, “Which doctrines are we to contend for?”

Dr. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Seminary, in an excellent article entitled “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” writes ==>

No congregation or denomination is perfect, and doctrinal conversations are often a sign of congregational health. The question of separation from a church should arise only when a matter of urgent theological significance is at stake — when it would violate both integrity and gospel witness . . . In the end, the only sufficient reason for separating from a church is theological. A faithful Christian must separate from a congregation or denomination when that body obstinately rejects efforts at doctrinal correction over an issue of true significance.

What is true significance? Mohler continues:

I have long argued for what I call a structure of theological triage. . . . The word triage comes from the French word trier, which means “to sort.” The same discipline that brings order to the hectic arena of the emergency room can also offer great assistance to Christians defending truth in the present age. We must learn to sort theological and doctrinal issues as part of our Christian responsibility.

With this in mind, I would suggest three different levels of theological urgency, each corresponding to a set of issues and theological priorities found in current doctrinal debates.

First-level theological issues would include those doctrines most central and essential to the Christian faith. Included among these most crucial doctrines would be doctrines such as the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith alone, and the authority of Scripture. These first-order doctrines represent the most fundamental truths of the Christian faith, and a denial of these doctrines represents nothing less than an eventual denial of Christianity itself. . . .

These first-order doctrines would include the virgin birth of Christ, His bodily resurrection, and other doctrines clearly taught in the Bible and necessary to understanding who Christ is and what His atonement accomplished. Thus, justification by faith alone is also rightly categorized in this first-order rank, for w/o this truth the church falls.

The set of second-order doctrines is distinguished from the first-order set by the fact that believing Xns may disagree on the second-order issues, though this disagreement will create significant boundaries between believers. When Xns organize themselves into congregations and denominational forms, these boundaries become evident.

Second-order issues would include the meaning and mode of baptism. Baptists and Presbyterians, for example, fervently disagree over the most basic understanding of Christian baptism. . . . Standing together on the first-order doctrines, Baptists and Presbyterians eagerly recognize each other as believing Christians, but recognize that disagreement on issues of this importance will [may] prevent fellowship within the same congregation or denomination. First-order issues determine Christian identity and integrity. Second-order issues determine ecclesiology.

Third-order issues are doctrines over which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations. I would put most of the debates over eschatology, for example, in this category. Christians who affirm the bodily, historical, and victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ may differ over timetable and sequence without rupturing the fellowship of the church. Christians may find themselves in disagreement over any number of issues related to the interpretation of difficult texts or the understanding of matters of common disagreement. Nevertheless, standing together on issues of more urgent importance, believers are able to accept one another without compromise when third-order issues are in question.

Christians should never separate from a church over third-order issues, much less over issues that do not even rise to this importance. Believers in Christ are obligated to see all issues of biblical truth as included in our stewardship of the gospel, but the New Testament makes clear that, while unity on essentials is vital, diversity on other questions need not threaten the unity of the church.

Would add that when t/unity of t/CH is threatened, our min. is hindered & our witness to t/world, tarnished. Proposition, “How they love 1 another” is changed to “How they can't get along w/1 another!”

To ==>

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints

is to contend for those “first order doctrines” Mohler outlines.

(3) Even that is to be done in love

Mindful of t/Church at Ephesus which is commended for its doctrinal integrity while at t/same time admonished for having lost its first love (Rev. 2:4)

I. Introduction: What is Jude Talking About? (v. 3)

A. Change in Plans: A Faith Worth Defending

Why? What's going on here? are the readers to be combatants for the faith? That answer is in v. 4.

II. Explanation: Why All the Fuss, Jude? (v. 4)

The ==>

I. A. Change in Plans: A Faith Worth Defending

was brought about by ==>

A. Change in Circumstances: A Faith Under Attack

Note that first word ==>

For

For certain men have slipped in, those whose judgment was written about long ago, ungodly [men] who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

A. Change in Circumstances: A Faith Under Attack

Certain men who have certain characteristics & face a certain judgment

1. Certain Men (They've Weaseled their Way into the Church)

For certain men have slipped in,

The entire phrase is derogatory. “certain people creeping in” (certain creepy people!). “These people” (v. 8/10); => “these” by v. 12,16,19.

a. They've Weaseled their Way into the Church

weasel ('wi zəl)

1. any small carnivore of the genus *Mustela*, of the family *Mustelidae*, having a long, slender body and feeding chiefly on small rodents and birds: includes ferrets, stoats, minks, and ermines.

2. any of various similar carnivores of the family Mustelidae.
3. a cunning, sneaky person.
4. to evade an obligation, duty, or the like; renege (often fol. by out).
5. to use weasel words; be ambiguous; mislead.

παρεισδύω (παρά, beside; + εἰς, in; +δύω, to sink, plunge). “To slip in secretly as by a side entrance.” [ATR] Enter in by stealth.

(1) These are false teachers who have infiltrated the local church

Not enough that we have to contend for the faith with those o/s t/CH – it's really bad when we have to contend for t/faith w/i it!

12 **These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves . . .**

TAP, in Acts 20, calls t/elders of t/CH at Ephesus together ==>

28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

They come in by stealth; they come in to divide and conquer.

They may have slipped in unnoticed by t/CH – but not by God.

These ==>

1. Certain Men (They've Weaseled their Way into the Church)

Face ==>

2. Certain Judgment (Predicted Long Ago)

For certain men have slipped in, those whose judgment was written about long ago . . .

a. Translation Issue here

KJV – For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation . . .

NASB – For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation . . .

NIV – For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. . . .

ESV – For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation . . .

How do you translate the verb? Were they ==>
ordained? marked out? designated? written about?

Perfect passive participle, from προγραφο (to write or record beforehand). προ + γραφο.

b. Three options:

1) The judgment of t/false teachers was recorded in t/heavenly books from before t/found. of t/world. Concept of 'heavenly records' (book of life / death) common theme in both Jewish & Xn circles. Rev. 20:12 speaks of “books being opened” one of which was “the book of life.”

Another way of saying that their destruction has been foreordained (Clement of Alexandria; Calvin).

Proverbs 16:4 **The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.**

2) Jude or another Xn leader (apostle?) had recently predicted t/judgment of these false teachers.

Some even hold that Jude was referring to 2 Peter 2:1 ==>

BUT false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

Peter predicted it and it was a reality for both he and Jude.

Problems:

Adverb πάλαι (long ago, formerly) is generally used of t/distant past, not something more recent.

Saying that Jude was thinking of Peter assumes that Peter wrote 2 Peter before Jude wrote Jude. More likely it was t/other way around.

3) Their judgment was recorded in ancient Jewish prophecy.

This view seems best in my mind. It does justice to the words Jude uses (πάλαι - long ago & προγραφο – to write beforehand).

Also fits t/context, esp. what follows in vv. 5-16.

D.A. Carson calls this “The most plausible interpretation of Jude 4” . . . [that] the author has in mind ancient Jewish prophecies found in the Scriptures, for these are the examples that he proceeds to list in vv. 5-7,11. Taken together, they demonstrate that, at least typologically, the judgment that befell certain people in ancient times points to similar judgment falling on those with similar failings in Jude's own day. These ancient prophecies may, in Jude's mind, include prophetic words from *1 Enoch* . . . [D.A. Carson, Commentary on NT use of the OT]

1. Certain Men (They've Weaseled their Way into the Church)

Face ==>

2. Certain Judgment (Predicted Long Ago)

Inescapable.

3. Certain Characteristics (Weasels with Features)

What does a weasel look like? If you're talking about t/mammal, they are long, slender animals varying in length from 7 to 9". They usu. have a red/brown coat w/a white belly & have short tails.

If you're talking about False teachers, heretics, Satan's Demolition Crew, they are 1) They are ungodly; 2) They pervert grace; 3) They deny the Lordship of Christ.

ungodly [men] who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

a. Godless; b. Licentious; c. Lordless.

Give us a preview of what follows in vv. 5-16.

a. Godless ἄσεβης

At its base level, this word refers to someone who lives as if God doesn't exist.

Note that even those who profess Christ and 'believe' in Him can be considered "godless."

3 forms of t/same word (Verb, Noun, Adj) are used in v. 15 ==>

[the Lord came] **to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all 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.**"

Used again in v. 18 as an adj. modifying “lusts” ==>

“In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.”

b. Licentious

[they] turn the grace of our God into licentiousness

Moses turned water into blood. Jesus turned water into wine.

These men turn grace into license to sin. “Nothing up my sleeve...”

Word would indicate sin of a sexual nature.

Same word is used 3x in 2 Peter chapt. 2 (trans. “sensuality”)

2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

18 For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape . . .

. . . ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God’s marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives.

[New Living Translation (3rd ed.)]

c. Lordless

Not only do they **turn the grace of our God into licentiousness** they also **deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

(1) This may be better understood as a result

Because they are ungodly // turn God's grace into sinful conduct ==> they **deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

The construction here indicates that Jesus Christ is the antecedent of the nouns “Master” and “Lord” (Sharp's Rule).

KJV . . . denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

May be that a scribe, knowing that t/word “master” here (δεσποτος) is normally used for God the Father, inserted the word θεος.

However, 2 Peter 2:1

BUT false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them . . .

Anyone who turns grace into license to sin ultimately denies the Lordship of JC.

I know of no other salvation in the NT (Bible) than that which is connected to Christ's Lordship.

He is Lord = He is God; He is Lord = He is Sov.; He is Lord = He is Master. If he's my Master and my God then I am His slave (cf. v. 1a).

The perversion of grace is tantamount to a denial of the author of grace, Jesus Christ.

When people don't obey someone – even if they call that person “Lord” or “Master” – they deny their profession with their conduct.

Luke 6:46 “And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

Going back to t/time of Martin Luther and t/Reformation, Luther had a friend and fellow co-laborer by the name of Johannes Agricola. After a seemingly solid start in the work of reform, Agricola went astray with grace, teaching that, “*Are you steeped in sin, an adulterer or a thief? If you believe you are in salvation.*”

After hearing that, Luther denounced him as an 'antinomian' and thus coined the term.

Titus 1:16 **They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable & disobedient, & worthless for any good deed.**

Go back to that word, ἅπαξ . . .

Faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Another use in 1 Peter 3:18 **For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God . . .**

The tabernacle & temple in Jerusalem had regular sacrifices for sin that were going on all the time. Repeated.

All of these repeated bloody sacrifices foreshadowed a final bloody sacrifice that would be a ἅπαξ! The sacrificial death of Christ (was for sin, it was t/just for the unjust, it was to reconcile us to God) was sufficient. It can never be rivaled or repeated. It's done!

When He cried out from the cross, τετέλεσται ("It is finished!") He meant it.

For even Christ suffered once for all concerning sin, the just for the unjust, in order to reconcile us to God-

That is t/apex of t/faith once for all delivered to the saints.