

Contend for the Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 June 2015

Preacher: Peter Adam

[0 : 00] Well, Peter is going to be preaching to us this morning from the little letter of Jude. And we're going to turn to that and read that now.

If you have one of our church Bibles, it's page 1027. If you have your own Bible, it's the second last book of the New Testament just before Revelation.

Easy to miss, just one page. But a very important message indeed. And so we're going to read the whole letter together.

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I find it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

[1 : 08] For certain people have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were designated for this condemnation. Ungodly people who pervert the grace of God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

And I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, just as they serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner, these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

[2 : 15] But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain, and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error, and perished in Korah's rebellion.

These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, looking after themselves. Waterless clouds swept along by winds. Fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted.

Wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame. Wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

[3 : 16] It was also about these that Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of the holy ones to execute judgment on all and convict all the ungodly of their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loudmouth boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last time, there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions.

It is these who cause divisions. Worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith.

Pray 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.

[4 : 31] Save others by snatching them out of the fire. And to others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. 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, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, and now, and forever.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Amen. Well, the letter of Jude is a conveniently short letter, and a letter with a very plain message.

Jude writes in verse 3, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

You'll find the letter of Jude on page 1027 in the Church Bibles. It's a great delight to be with you. I'd like to thank Willie so much for his invitation and welcome. We've had a great week with the pastor's training course, and it's a delight to be with you again here.

Well, letter writing is a lost art, I suspect. We manage emails, or texts, as they're called, but letters are few and far between.

[6 : 13] To understand the letter of Jude, we need to know that there were two letters. One was the letter Jude wanted to write, and the other was the letter he had to write.

You'll find both of them mentioned in verse 3. Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, that's the letter he wanted to write, this is the letter he wrote, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

This Jude, who wrote the letter, is most likely a half-brother of Jesus and a brother of James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

We don't know which churches Jude was writing, but we do know that the letter is addressed not to leaders of churches, but to the members of churches.

Look back at verses 1 and 2. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to all who were called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.

[7 : 38] So when Jude writes in verse 3, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, the you is the same you as in verse 1, to those who were called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.

It was a letter addressed to all believers, to every believer, to all members of the church. Just think about those members of the churches to which Jude wrote his letter.

Most would have been illiterate, unable to read or write. And even those who could read wouldn't have had a Bible of their own. They would have heard the scriptures of the Old and New Testament read in church.

They wouldn't actually have their own copy. And yet remarkably, Jude is writing to people like this and appealing to them to contend for the faith.

It's often easy in a church to think that what the minister does matters. But actually the New Testament letters make it very clear that what defines a church is not what the minister does or the minister believes, but what the people do.

[9 : 07] The minister might urge us to pray, but that has no effect unless we pray. The minister might urge us to welcome new people to the church, but that has no effect at all unless you and I decide to do it.

And that's true of Jude's appealing to the saints to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

You see, the faith wasn't delivered to the apostles. The faith was delivered through the apostles to the saints. So who owns the truth of the gospel?

The answer is, you, the people of God, own it. We, the people of God, own it. God delivered it to us, all of us, each one of us.

That's why what every member of the church does matters. Please don't think to yourself, well, this is a church where lots of people pray, so it doesn't matter if I pray or I don't pray.

[10 : 27] No, what each one of us does in our church affects the whole church. Either we are making the church a more prayerful church or a less prayerful church.

Either we're making a church closer to God's truth or further away from God's truth. Either we are contending for the faith individually or we're dragging the church away from the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

I once looked up the once for all phrases in the New Testament. Most of them are about the once for all nature of Jesus' death on the cross.

We read, for example, in Hebrews about Christ's sacrifice. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

But here in Jude, we find the little phrase once for all used again. I found it necessary to write to you to contend for the faith that was once for all, that is once for all time delivered to the saints.

[11 : 51] Our salvation was once for all in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. And our faith is once for all delivered to the saints in New Testament times.

So Jude isn't saying to the leaders of the church, please contend for the faith. He's saying to all the church, please contend for the faith.

Now most of us that I can see have two ears and I want you to listen to this sermon with two ears, one for yourself and with one ear for other people.

Because I find so often that the week after I've heard a sermon, someone asks me a question and I think, oh, I heard a sermon about that recently and occasionally I think, well, I preached a sermon about that recently.

So you see, what God is doing as each Sunday is not just training us for godliness but also equipping us for usefulness. So please listen for others as well as for yourself.

[13 : 00] And you might be thinking, well, we don't need to be told to contend for the faith but perhaps you might meet somebody in the next couple of weeks from another church who does need to be told to contend for the faith.

So, let's get double value out of this sermon and listen for others as well as for ourselves. Why might the ordinary believers of Jude's day be reluctant to contend for the faith?

Why does he have to appeal to them to contend for the faith? Perhaps they didn't feel confident enough about the nature of the Christian faith to contend for it or perhaps they didn't like conflict or didn't like arguments.

Well, as I mentioned, I was converted when I was just a teenager, 16 years old and one of the most dramatic changes my conversion made to me made in me was that I suddenly realized that what other people believed mattered.

When I was an arrogant young teenager I used to think that other people were wrong, notably my parents but I wouldn't bother trying to correct them because it wasn't worth the effort, you see.

[14 : 17] You can imagine what a precocious and ugly young teenager I was. But I suddenly learned that actually the truth matters. That's one thing my conversion told me and I became concerned about what other people believed or didn't believe and one of the best books I read soon after I was converted was a book by John Stott, Christ the Controversialist which shows how Jesus is engaged in public controversy about the truth about God and the truth about the gospel.

Well, there may have been some people who liked the idea of contending for the faith. There may have been others who thought they weren't up to it or didn't want to do it.

Whoever they were, Jude wrote, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith. Isn't that interesting?

Not instructing you or ordering you but appealing to you to contend for the faith. And I want you to hear the power of that appeal that Jude makes to us today as well as to the people to whom he wrote.

well, why does Jude need to write urging the churches to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints?

[15 : 44] The reason why is found in verse 4. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, then there are two important things about them, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality, and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

These people had crept in as members of the church. They were obviously active members of the church. They were at the love feast each week. They were perhaps noticed by the leaders but perhaps unnoticed by the people, or perhaps even, more frighteningly, unnoticed by both leaders and people.

For you see, if the faith has been once for all delivered to the saints, then the saints are responsible for its preservation and proclamation. That's why they have to contend for that faith, because it has been delivered to them by God.

Now, there are two remarkable signs of these people, two important features of their ideas, their lives. They do two things.

They pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. They pervert the grace and deny the Lord.

[17 : 16] To pervert the grace, I think, is to take advantage of the grace. We love the word grace, don't we? The grace of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The grace which means that God's gift is a free gift. We can't earn it. It is saving grace of God. But what many Christians do around the world today, and I'm afraid it is true in Anglicanism across the world, is that they take grace for granted, or rather they say grace is saving grace but not transforming grace.

grace. And the feature of churches which do this is that what they want to do is have, in Anglicanism, what's called an open table. That is, they want to welcome everybody to communion, whether they're Christians or not, Hindus, Muslims, everybody must feel free to come.

That is, they say, God's grace welcomes everybody, but there's no call for repentance, no call for allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is grace, but grace misunderstood.

For as we know, saving grace is also transforming grace. As one American writer puts it, God loves us just the way we are, but loves us too much to leave us the way we are.

- [18 : 34] That's good, isn't it? He loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us the way we are. Or we might say, in slightly different words, that Christ's blood shed on the cross was so powerful that it not only achieved a turnment for our sins and turned aside God's wrath, but God's blood also changes us and enables us to die to sin.

As we pray, as we sing, be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power. So to pervert God's grace is to take it for granted.

It is to go on sinning that grace may abound. To pervert God's grace is to take God for granted and neglect the fact that he is a holy God as well as a loving God.

The second feature of this people who've crept into the church is that they deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. They may say they love God, but in fact they deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

They may say they love Jesus the Saviour, but they deny Jesus the Master and the Lord. That is, they'll take what he gives, but not do what he says.

- [19 : 57] Well, I was involved in a court case in Melbourne a few years ago. A gay activist group applied to use a Brethren campsite for some of their activities, and the Brethren campsite refused to do so, and so the gay activist group took them to court.

The campsite, I might say, was fairly unwise in my opinion because they didn't indicate on their website that there would be any restrictions about those who might use the property.

I was the expert witness for the Brethren, one to one, an Anglican has to do that, but apparently they couldn't find one among the Brethren, so they brought in a mere Anglican.

As the court case went on, I realised that actually the issue was not sexuality. The issue was, should we let God determine what we do?

That was the real point of disagreement in the court. And I think denying our only master and Lord Jesus Christ is so palatable, so easy, even for Christians today, because of a remarkable combination of beliefs that's proven in our society.

- [21 : 23] The first belief is that real human beings are thoroughly autonomous, that is, absolutely independent. And we mustn't be told what to do by anybody, any human being, but certainly not by God.

That's our duty to be independent human beings. The second idea which comes with that is that we do psychological damage to ourselves if all our needs are not met.

That's a silly idea, of course. It may be dangerous to refuse to acknowledge needs that we have, but it's certainly not dangerous to have a need and decide not to meet it.

It's not dangerous to refuse to eat the second chocolate at night, may I say. You might think I need that chocolate, but you don't, and you won't damage yourself if you don't eat it.

That's a wonderful news, isn't it? Haven't I cheered you up? And the third idea is that in our society, around the Western world, is that we have a duty to create ourselves, to create our own moral system, our own moral values, our own person.

- [22 : 38] And I think what a pressure that must put on young people when they not only have to deal with school and getting up and things like that, but also creating their own moral universe, a very demanding exercise.

So we, in the West, I think, are very prone to deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ, because we don't want to bow the knee to anyone, because we think it's dangerous to do so, because we might not get all we want, and because we think we have a duty to form our own opinions and our own lifestyle.

These two signs, these two indications, I think, are connected. It may be that the people who crept into Jude's churches perverted, that's what they wanted to do, pervert God's grace, take it for granted, and so the necessary consequence was that they denied their only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Or it might have been that they began by denying their only Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and that led to them perverting God's grace. I don't know which way it went, but I do know that if you do pervert God's grace, then you must necessarily deny your Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Anglicans, and you may not have met any during your lifetime, Anglicans are generally nice people, and Anglicans don't do heresy by asserting it, they engage in what I call soft heresy, that is, neglecting the truth.

[24 : 29] So an Anglican heretic usually doesn't deny things publicly, they just forget to mention that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. In fact, I went to a funeral last year, somebody was dead as you might have imagined, and they had the Bible reading, it was an Anglican church, they had the Bible reading from John 14, which included I am the way, the truth, and the life, and stop there.

And see, the minister edited out the words, no one comes to the Father but by me. They didn't deny it, they just left it unsaid. Imagine the arrogance of editing the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, I couldn't believe it, but it happened.

Or perhaps they're not brave enough to deny plainly and clear words and open communication, it may be by what they do, or really what they let others do without rebuke.

Well, Jude says, these people have crept in unnoticed. Well, I take it this isn't true of this church at this time, though it might be true sometime in the future.

But what happened to you was that these people crept into your denomination, people who perverted God's grace and denied our only Master and Lord.

[26 : 02] And I'm so thankful that you noticed what was happening and you acted on it. So I'm looking at people who did contend for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints.

God's grace and I want you to know how precious that was to God and how precious it was to believers all around the world.

See, I was immensely discouraged a number of years ago when a minister whom I admired greatly at one stroke left his wife, his faith and his ministry. I was tremendously discouraged and somebody said to me, well, the fact that you're so discouraged by those who give up shows how encouraged you are by those who continue.

Yes, that's exactly right. So I then made it a practice in my daily prayers to thank God for those whom I knew who continued in gospel truth and gospel ministry.

You see, we encourage each other by standing together, but you actually encourage Christians all around the world by contending for the faith.

[27 : 20] A costly thing to do? Praise God that you did it. And you're still contending for the faith today.

But we're told in this letter not only what we must do, but how we must do it. how should we contend for the faith?

We had a prime minister a few years ago, John Howard, and it was a time when there were people threatening to beat terrorists and attack people in Australia.

And John was a good plain-speaking Australian, and his great motto, which he used in every press conference, was be alert but not alarmed. And we used to say it with him every time we saw him on television, be alert but not alarmed.

But I think that actually captures what Jude is saying. He's saying, be alert but not alarmed. Let me show you how that is. Remember, first of all, that unbelievers have been present in the past and God has judged them, verses 5 to 13.

[28 : 32] So God's people who came out of Egypt, later the Lord Jesus later punished them. And the earthly gifts and life in the land in the Old Testament were of course a sign and promise of future life.

So punishments in the Old Testament were warnings of eternal punishments in the new. Also, we read of the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling.

He's left in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. Second example, third example, verse 7, as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities which likewise indulge in sexual immorality and pursue a natural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

So, what's happening now, Jude is saying, has happened in the past, that actually it's all under God's control. Unbelievers have been present in the past among the people of God, among the angels, and among the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and God has judged them.

That is, we can trust God to judge his world and his church. He will do it. Doesn't happen now.

[29 : 54] Finally. It will happen one day. Finally. We don't have to panic and think that we have to achieve the judgment of God. No, God will do it on the last day.

So, our contending for the faith is not a desperate contending for the faith, which means that we have to defeat these people. God will judge them as God will judge everyone on the last day.

In like manner, we read in verse 8, these people were lying on their dreams. Notice they've rejected the faith once for all of the saints, but they rely on their dreams. What a futile exercise that is.

They defile the flesh, that is they're immoral. They reject authority and blaspheme the glorious ones. How unwise to blaspheme the glorious ones, that is the messengers of eternal salvation.

Well, then he gives the example of the archangel Michael contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses. He did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, the Lord rebuke you.

[31 : 04] But these people blaspheme all they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

It was G.K. Chesterton who wrote that when people don't believe in God, it's not that they believe nothing, but that they will believe anything. And that is true of confused people inside the church, as well as it is true of confused people outside the church.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, where in the Old Testament do we read about Michael and the devil disputing about the body of Moses?

I don't remember reading that. Well, if you don't remember reading that, that's probably a good sign, because it isn't there. And this is one of a number of occasions in this letter, where Jude refers to things which aren't recorded in the Bible.

And some people get worried about that, about the Bible including things which don't come from the Bible. Indeed, I once read a book that claimed that the New Testament only ever quoted the Old Testament.

[32 : 22] That's not true, not true here, and not true later in the letter. But please remember that Paul at Athens quoted a pagan poet.

In Titus 1 he quoted a Cretan prophet, a prophet from Crete, who said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. Paul in Acts 20 quoted the saying of the Lord Jesus, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

That saying isn't in the Gospels, but people remembered it, and so Paul quoted it. And Paul in his letter to the Colossians refers to his letter to the Laodiceans and says to the Colossians, we'll read it.

Well, we can't do that, we don't have that letter. So it's not an alarming thing when the New Testament quotes things from outside the Old Testament.

And I suspect the reason that Jude did it was because these people who had infiltrated the church brought a strange sort of concoction of Judaism and Christianity, and their Judaism included these ideas which weren't found in the Old Testament.

[33 : 37] I suspect that's why Jude included this information in his letter. But we return to the Old Testament in verse 11.

Woe to them! they walked in the way of Cain, of course, who murdered his brother, and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error. You read about Balaam the prophet who took money to prophesy in Numbers 22 to 24, or they perish in Korah's rebellion.

You read about that in Numbers 16, where Korah and some other leaders came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, you've gone too far, the whole community is holy, every one of them, the Lord is with them, why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?

So again, people are wanting to refute the authority ordained by God. And Jude returns to describing them in verse 12.

These are blemishes on your love feast, that is, they're there in your weekly assembly. They feast with you, but without fear, that is, without fear of God, without fear of judgment, looking after themselves.

[34 : 52] Then he describes them as people who are worthless, that is, they're like clouds which don't bring water. You may not know about clouds which don't bring water here in Scotland, but we do have them occasionally in Australia.

Waterless clouds swept along by the winds, or like fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead and uprooted, that is, not going to produce any fruit, or again, their behavior is erratic and beyond the pale, wild ways of the sea casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

the people in Jude's churches may have been unnerved, disturbed, worried, frantic, at receiving Jude's letter because they hadn't realized that these people had crept in among them.

But they mustn't panic. They should be alert but not alarmed. How should they contend? Confident that God has judged unbelievers in the past and so can judge them today.

How should they contend? Verses 14 to 19. Remember that these present unbelievers have been prophesied by Enoch and by the apostles of Christ.

[36 : 22] Enoch was a descendant of Adam in the seventh generation rather. You read about him in Genesis 5. He walked faithfully with God.

And we don't have in our Bibles the prophecy of Enoch. It was kept in other Jewish writings. He prophesied saying, Behold the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they committed in such non-godly way and of all the harsh things sinners have spoken against them.

So, deeds of ungodliness and harsh things spoken against God. And Jude thinks, well, this is a prophecy of the people in our churches.

This is a prophecy being fulfilled today. Perhaps, indeed, the people who'd crept in had been legalistic Jews, had now become libertine Christians.

Legalistic from legalism to liberalism. But the presence of these unbelievers in Jude's church is not only predicted, prophesied by Enoch in Old Testament times, but also prophesied by the apostles of Christ in New Testament times.

[37 : 47] Verse 17, You must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles about our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions.

Well, Jude has applied the prophecy of Enoch to the present day in verse 16. They are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires, loudmouth boasters showing favoritism to gain advantage.

He describes them again as fulfilling the prophecy of the apostles of the Lord Jesus in verse 19. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people devoid of the spirit.

Remember that unbelievers have been present in the past? God will judge them. Remember that these present unbelievers have been prophesied by Enoch and by the apostles of Christ.

Now, Jude, of course, didn't write these words for our day and our church and our age, but God did. These are words of encouragement to us today.

[39 : 08] In the West, as we see Christians who have turned aside to other ways, who have abandoned the faith once for all to the saints, who have turned grace into sensuality and denied our Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. We don't contend by panicking. We don't contend by trying to achieve the perfect judgment of God.

We contend by trusting in God. Not only trusting in God because God has dealt with the situation before, but because even this present situation was prophesied by Enoch and by the apostles.

If Enoch prophesied the presence of unbelievers and sinners, even in the people of God, so did the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So how do we contend? We contend, first of all, trusting God the judge. And here are two prayers which I pray very often because I tend to panic rather than trusting God the judge.

[40 : 22] Here are two prayers I pray. I trust in your Son Jesus Christ as the powerful and generous saviour, head, lord and judge of his church. So I don't have to try and create a perfect church or think that if a church around the world isn't perfect then Jesus' gospel plan isn't working out.

No, I trust Jesus as the powerful and generous saviour, head, lord and judge of his church. And when I hear the news, and our news is almost always bad news, the person always says on the TV good evening and then tells you why it isn't.

That's why I need to pray the following prayer of trust. I trust you as the just judge of all people. We don't have to do the judging. God will do it.

He has the knowledge and the power to do it perfectly. God how do we contend? Knowing that God has judged unbelievers in the past.

How do we contend? Knowing that unbelievers in the present have been prophesied by God's messengers. How do we contend? Well, here Jude tells us how to deal with ourselves and how to deal with those who need our help.

[41 : 48] verse 20 But you beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of God in Christ.

That is, we exercise appropriate self-care. We mustn't be so obsessed with those who are doing things wrong that we forget to focus on our own need to be right with God and to be sustained by God's almighty power, for us to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, rejoicing in what we know to be true, and praying in the Holy Spirit, and keeping ourselves aware that we're keeping ourselves in God's great love, waiting for the mercy of God in Christ when the Lord Jesus returns.

It's possible, isn't it, to be so obsessed with things which are wrong that we forget the things which are right, to be so focused on what other people are doing wrong, that we forget to tend and care for ourselves, and to celebrate and rejoice in what is right.

So we must continue to build ourselves up in our most holy faith. Notice that isn't just, I build myself up, it is that we build each other up in our most holy faith.

How do we do that? We do that by rehearsing to each other, by saying to each other, the great things about God we believe. God is a forgiving God.

[43 : 16] A great thing to know ourselves, a great thing to say to somebody else. I was at a conference recently and one of the other speakers was looking very gloomy, so I walked up to him and said, I said, God loves you so much.

He was very surprised. I suppose he knew it, but it was rather nice to have somebody say that. God loves you so much. What a great thing to say to the person you come into church with on a Sunday morning.

God loves you so much. It's true, and we encourage each other if we say what is true. We build ourselves up in our most holy faith.

And we pray in the Holy Spirit. As we keep on asking God to act, we think of what we must do. The people in Jude's churches must contend for the faith, but we must pray in the Holy Spirit for ourselves as well, and to keep ourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of God in Christ.

Don't be obsessed with those who are wrong, with the error of those who are wrong, so that we lose perspective, we focus on the wrong. No, this self-care is so important.

[44 : 22] As much as we contend for the faith, we have to care for ourselves thus we become bitter, exhausted, or angry with those who fail to be fellow contenders.

Well, you might well think, but Jude still hasn't told us what to do when we contend. He's told us how to do it and how to care for ourselves, how should we contend.

Well, the answer is found in verses 22 and 23. You might notice in these verses that the word mercy occurs twice.

Have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. Do others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh? Merciful contending, you see, is trying to win people, not arguments.

It's praying that God will forgive people who are in error and ask God to forgive them for that sin and for their sin of leading others into error.

[45 : 35] You might notice if you look carefully that the word mercy occurs in verse 21 as well as in verse 22 and 23. We keep ourselves in the love of God waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ so then we can afford to have mercy on those who doubt.

I think there are three groups, by the way, in verse 22 and 23. Those who doubt are those who are on the edge of the ideas, they're slightly attracted but need to be rescued, have mercy on them, that is, bring them back from their doubt to full confidence in the faith, in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To those who are a bit more involved, who are a bit more seduced by these ideas, save others by snatching them out of the fire. And to those who are actually following these false teachers, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh, that is, still not wanting to associate it with their idea, lest we be contaminated by it.

Your contending is precious to God and precious to other believers around the world. I found this remarkable prayer from the church in the Middle East, currently facing persecution, of people.

Don't pray for us, pray with us. If you pray for us, you'll pray for the wrong things, you'll pray for safety. But if you pray with us, you'll ask God to bring millions to faith in Christ.

[47 : 12] And you'll pray that even when the inevitable backlash comes, because of our witness, we'll be faithful even if it costs us our lives. will be to hear of us.

What an encouragement it is to hear of those who are standing firm in persecution. What encouragement it is to know that others around the world are also contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

God to keep you and present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

You might notice that Jude has begun his letter with this idea, to those who are called, beloved, and kept for Jesus Christ. Now he says, to him he was able to keep you from stumbling and present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

To the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, now, and forever. From judgment to joy.

[48 : 24] From endurance to hope. From contending to contentment. From gloom to glory. From faith and obedience to praise.

We contend, confident in God's great power to save his people certainly and forever. The day is not lost, Jude is saying, to him who is able to keep you, not you as individuals, but you the people of God, from, not just from falling, but even from stumbling.

Not just to keep you from stumbling, but to present you blameless. Not just present you blameless, but before presenting you blameless before the presence of his glory. Not just with great glory, but with great joy.

And where does this confidence come from? To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, and now, and forever.

a beam of light from the future shines into the dark present. And that beam of light is the glory of God and the salvation of his people.

[49 : 45] Let us pray. heavenly Father, when we need to contend, please sustain us and comfort us.

please give us a firm trust in you as our great judge. Give us a firm trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Give us a great hope for that day when we will be presented before you without stumbling, blameless, before your presence of your glory with great joy.

glory, majesty, dominion, and power, now and forever.