

# **Lesson 1**

*Jude 1-4*

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<sup>1</sup> My sincere gratitude to Mark Copeland for his notes on the epistle of Jude. They have been used a basis for these studies.

## Introduction

1. The New Testament is filled with warnings concerning false teachers and their deadly influences:
  - a. **Warnings from Jesus:**

**Matthew 7:15** “*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.*”

**Matthew 24:11** “*...many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.*”
  - b. **Warnings from Paul:**

**Acts 20:29-30** “<sup>29</sup> *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*”

**1 Timothy 4:1-2** “<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. <sup>2</sup> Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*”

**2 Timothy 4:3-4** “<sup>3</sup> *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*”
  - c. **Warnings from Peter:**

**2 Peter 2:1-3** “<sup>1</sup> *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup> Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. <sup>3</sup> In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*”
  - d. **Warnings from John:**

**1 John 2:18** “*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.*”

**1 John 4:1** “*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*”

**2 John 7** “*Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*”
2. In addition, we also find the New Testament warning us about impending apostasy. An apostate is not a true Christian who lost his salvation. An apostate is one that outwardly professed to be a Christian and then turned away from the faith. 1 John 2:19 describes apostates in this manner:

“*They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*”
3. The Epistle of Jude is a letter written to warn about apostasy and the need to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. As one commentator said, the Epistle of Jude can be titled as, “**The Acts of the Apostates.**” It is believed to have been written about A.D. 68-70 prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is very similar in content to that found in 2 Peter [especially chapter 2].
4. If the danger of apostasy was already present in the First Century A.D....
  - a. We should not be surprised that the same dangers exist in the twenty-first century!
  - b. We would do well to pay close heed to those epistles written to tell us how to deal with it

## I. The Author and the Recipients [1-2]

<sup>1</sup> *Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:* <sup>2</sup> *Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.*

1. Jude identifies himself...
  - a. As *“a servant of Jesus Christ”* and *“brother of James”*
  - b. It is considered very likely that James was the brother of the Lord and one who had become very prominent in the church at Jerusalem [Gal 1:19, 2:9; Acts 15:13].
  - c. This would mean Jude was also a brother to the Lord Jesus [Matt 13:54-56].
  - d. That Jude would describe himself as a servant of the Lord and not his brother is typical of the humility shown by James as well [Jas 1:1]
2. He then addresses his original readers...
  - a. No particular church or individuals are named
  - b. They are simply *“those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ:”*
  - c. For this reason, the epistle of Jude has been categorized as a general epistle [like James, 1-2 Peter, and 1-2-3 John]
3. He concludes his salutation with a threefold benediction: *“Mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance.”*

The manner in which Jude addressed his readers is worthy of careful notice...

### I. CHRISTIANS ARE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN “CALLED”

#### A. Those in Christ have been “called”

1. We have been called with “a holy calling”

**2 Timothy 1:9** “[God]...has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”
2. This calling was “not because of anything we have done.”
3. It was according to God’s “own purpose and grace...before the beginning of time.”

#### B. This call came through the Gospel

1. This calling was made effective through the hearing and acceptance of the gospel:

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** <sup>13</sup> *But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.* <sup>14</sup> *He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
2. While there is a general call from God to all sinners [Ezek 33:11; Matt 11:28], the calling that is described here is God’s special and irresistible call to all that have been chosen by him for salvation:

**John 6:44** “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

### C. Our responsibility, after being called, is to make our “calling and election sure”...

1. This requires much diligence on our part:  
**2 Peter 1:10-11** “<sup>10</sup> Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to **make your calling and election sure**. For if you do these things, you will never fall, <sup>11</sup> and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
2. Otherwise, we will be like the Israelites in the wilderness [Heb 4:12-19, 4:1-11]
  - a. All were called by God to enter the Promised Land of rest
  - b. But most were unable to enter because of unbelief that led to lack of diligence!

## II. CHRISTIANS ARE THOSE WHO ARE “LOVED” BY GOD THE FATHER

### A. Those in Christ are the Objects of God’s Sovereign Love

1. God placed his love on believers in eternity past:  
**Ephesians 1:4-6** “<sup>4</sup> For he **chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight**. In love <sup>5</sup> he **predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—** <sup>6</sup> **to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.**”
2. This love was based on his own sovereign purposes and for reasons beyond human comprehension [Rom 9:11-13; 1 Cor 1:26-31].

### B. This love is an Everlasting Love

1. God’s love is not fickle as human love. Those that are loved by God and are called by him to salvation will never have to fear the loss of God’s love [Rom 8:38-39].  
**Romans 8:38-39** “<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, **nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”
2. The everlasting love of God for believers should motivate believers to love God with all of their being and thus compel them to walk in obedience.  
**2 Corinthians 5:14-15** “<sup>14</sup> For **Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.** <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that **those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**”

## III. CHRISTIANS ARE THOSE WHO ARE “KEPT” BY JESUS CHRIST

### A. The meaning of the word “Kept”

1. It comes from the Greek word “tereo” which means “to guard [from loss or injury]”
2. It is used to describe that which is closely watched and guarded...
  - a. Such as those disobedient angels who are awaiting the Judgment Day [Jude 6]
  - b. Such as the punishment awaiting ungodly men [Jude 13]

### B. This word speaks of our Wonderful Assurance in Christ

1. We are being carefully “guarded” in Christ!
2. Peter uses a different word to express a similar idea of our salvation being preserved:  
**1 Peter 1:3-5** “<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into **an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—** **kept in heaven for you,** <sup>5</sup> **who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**
3. Paul used yet another word to express his own confidence in God’s preservation:  
**2 Timothy 4:18** “**The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**”

4. Indeed, Jesus reassured his disciples that no one could “snatch” them out of His hand:  
**John 10:27-29** <sup>27</sup> *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* <sup>28</sup> *I give them eternal life, and **they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.*** <sup>29</sup> *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; **no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.***”

#### IV. CHRISTIANS ARE THOSE WHO ARE RECIPIENTS OF GOD’S MERCY, PEACE AND LOVE

- A. Christians are those that did not receive what they deserved for their sins [*wages of sin is death* – Rom 6:23]. That is the essence of “*mercy*.” God gave our punishment to Christ [Isa 53:4-5] so that he could be free to forgive us without violating his just nature.
- B. And as a result of Christ’s work on the cross, we have “*peace*” with God [Rom 5:1] and not his wrath [Eph 2:3-5]. Thus, we are qualified to experience his peace in our hearts [John 14:27].
- C. In addition, Christians are also recipients of God’s “*love*” [Rom 5:5-8].

#### CONCLUSION

1. We who are in Christ are indeed richly blessed:
- We are “*called*” by the gospel of Christ.
  - We are “*loved by God*.”
  - We are “*kept*” by Jesus Christ unto eternal life
  - We are the recipients of God’s “*mercy, peace and love... in abundance*”
2. But, forces of Satan are very much at work...
- They seek to undermine our faith in Christ
  - They seek to harden our hearts, and to develop an evil heart of unbelief
  - They seek to make us spiritually lazy, and not to maintain the diligence necessary to keep ourselves in the love of God. That is why Scripture constantly reminds us of the need to persevere:  
**John 8:31** *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”*  
Also see passages such as Colossians 1:22-23, Hebrews 4:12-14, Hebrews 10:36-39, Jude 21 and Revelation 2:10, 17, 26 that speak about perseverance.
3. God in his grace has preserved his Word to give us ample warning. It is our responsibility to heed his warnings found throughout his Word, specially such as those found in The Epistle of Jude.

## II. Contending For The Faith Jude 3-4

<sup>3</sup> *Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.* <sup>4</sup> *For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

1. As we begin to focus on the purpose of The Epistle of Jude, we see that his original desire was to write “*about the salvation we share*” in Christ [v. 3]. However, the need to change his purpose is seen in the next verse “*For certain men...have secretly slipped in*” [v. 4].
2. That such men “*secretly slipped in*” [v. 4] should give us pause...
  - a. That such could happen, despite the many warnings given by Jesus, Paul, and Peter
  - b. How much easier, then, for this to happen today when we live in time far removed from those initial warnings!
  - c. The phrase “*secretly slipped in*” is from a Greek word that was used to describe the seductive words of a clever lawyer that slowly seeps into the minds of a judge and jury and thus corrupt their thinking.
  - d. Similarly, apostate false teachers do not come announced as teachers of error, but **secretly slip in** under the umbrella of being true teachers of God’s word [2 Cor 11:13-15]. By mixing a little truth with their errors, they try to seduce people to depart from the truth.
3. In addition, that such false teachers will deny the all-sufficiency of Scriptures should not surprise us....
  - a. This can be inferred from the phrase “*the faith which once for all delivered to the saints*”
  - b. The expression “*once for all*” can rightly be worded “**one time for all time**”
  - c. That is, “*the faith*” (that body of doctrine which we are to believe) was delivered to the church “one time for all time” -- Revelation was not to be repeated, nor was there more to be revealed later on! Scripture contains all we need to become what God wants of us!

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** “<sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,* <sup>17</sup> *so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

**Revelation 22:18-19** “<sup>18</sup> *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.* <sup>19</sup> *And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*” [Note: While this may primarily apply to the book of Revelation, addition or deletion to this book does indirectly bring about addition or deletion to the entire Bible. Thus, this warning can be legitimately applied to the entire Scripture (also see Deut 4:2, 12:32; Prov 30:6)].
  - d. Thus when people suggest:
    - i. That God’s revelation is insufficient, or incomplete, or it is still in progress
    - ii. Or that God’s revelation needs to be repeated-- Then our task is to “*contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*”!

[In this section, we will first see the “Description of Apostates,” followed by the “Judgment of Apostates.” This will help us to better understand why we are commanded to contend for the faith. Lastly, we will look at “How-to Contend for the Faith.”]

## I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTATES [4b]

*They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

### A. They are Spiritual Phonies

*“godless men”*

Even though they claimed to belong to God and speak for God, in reality, they were enemies of God “*godless.*” All they had was “*a form of godliness,*” but lacked its power [2 Tim 3:5]

### B. They Pervert the Doctrine of Grace

*who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality*

1. There were those in Jude’s day who perverted the doctrine of grace as an excuse to sin [*“license for immorality”*]. So much so, they engaged in that which was openly shameful behavior.
2. There are some today who pervert the grace of God...
  - a. To excuse their disregard for the commands found in God’s Word
  - b. To justify their lifestyle that is contrary to the principles of the Bible [e.g. homosexuality, divorce, etc.]
  - c. By saying things such as: **“God is too loving, his grace is too wonderful, to condemn us when we are so sincere! Grace covers it all – you are free to pursue your own desires. After all, God wants you to be happy!”**
3. But those who “*contend for the faith*” will be ever mindful of what the grace of God truly teaches:

**Titus 2:11-12** <sup>11</sup> *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”*

### C. They Deny God’s Authority

*“deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”*

1. Jude had to deal with those who “*deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord*”
  - a. The term “**Sovereign**” means “Master,” or “Absolute Ruler.” The term “**Lord**” means “supreme in authority.”
  - b. These people were denying the absolute authority rightly belonging to Jesus
2. Today we often face people denying the authority of Jesus
  - a. By denying the divine nature of Christ, i.e. Christ is God, the second Person of the Trinity
  - b. By their setting up other standards of authority for what they believe or do [e.g. synod, convention, council, pope, etc.]
  - c. By their lack of respect to the Word of God [e.g. pick and choose what to obey]
3. Paul described such people in Titus 1:16:

*“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.”*

Thus, in the light of the description of the apostates, it is easy to understand the severe judgment that is in store for them.....

## II. THE JUDGMENT OF THE APOSTATES [4a]

<sup>4</sup> *For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you*

- A. Some might infer that Jude meant that these men were predestined to act this way.
- B. However, as one commentator correctly states: “Jude did not write that these men were ordained to become apostates, as though God were responsible for their sin. They became apostates because **they willfully turned away from the truth**. But **God did ordain that such people would be judged and condemned**. The old Testament prophets denounced the false prophets of their day, and both Jesus Christ and His Apostles pronounced judgment on them.”
- C. Yes, what is ordained is their punishment, that those who willfully turn from God will not escape his righteous condemnation!

In the light of the description and the judgment of the apostates, it is understandable as to why Jude commands us to contend for the faith. However, how are we to contend?

## III. THE “HOW-TO” CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

- A. The word “**contend**” [v. 3] is from the Greek word “epagonizomai” and is related to the English word “agony.”
  - 1. The term is associated with strife and combat of a most vigorous and determined variety. The **present tense of the verb** indicates that the **Christian struggle is to be continuous**.
  - 2. Jude believed that the foundational tenets of the Christian faith were under attack. Nothing but vigorous counter-contention would be sufficient.
  - 3. The use of such an expression therefore suggests that the matter is serious; we are at war! Paul describes the nature of our warfare:

**Ephesians 6:10-13** <sup>10</sup> *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*
  - 4. This is not a time to be unprepared; we must arm ourselves! **We must therefore contend with vigor, even to the point of agony**, for “*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*”!
- B. We must use the weapons at our disposal. Paul describes our weaponry:

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** <sup>3</sup> *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

**Ephesians 6:13-18** <sup>13</sup> *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”*

Notice that most of these things are for our own defense, lest we be lost in the struggle! Some people are so quick to take up the “sword”, they leave the rest of their armor behind!

- C. Paul also has something to say about **other weapons** that are to be used in this warfare. By refraining from quarrels and applying gentleness, we must use the Word, with patience and humility and thus correct the opposition:

**2 Timothy 2:23-26** <sup>23</sup> *Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.* <sup>24</sup> *And the **Lord's servant must not quarrel**; instead, he must be **kind to everyone**, able to teach, **not resentful**.* <sup>25</sup> *Those who oppose him he must **gently instruct**, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,* <sup>26</sup> *and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."*

## CONCLUSION

1. It is the fact...
  - a. That even today many are not obeying Christ as Lord. They pervert his teaching or set themselves as their own authority.
  - b. But those who "*contend for the faith once for all entrusted*"...
    - a. Will recognize the authority that belongs to Christ:  
**Matthew 28:18** "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*"
    - b. Will recognize the authority delegated to His apostles:  
**Acts 2:42** "*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching*"  
**1 Thessalonians 2:13** "*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*"
2. The call to "contend earnestly for the faith" is not a license to engage in fights and disputes.
3. But it is a call to vigorously contend with all the weapons at our disposal...
  - a. First and foremost, with the Word of God, applied first to self and then to others. Make sure that you "*take the plank out of your own eye*" so you will be able to see clear "*to remove speck out from your brother's eye*" [Matt 7:5]. Be certain that you are **personally** holding onto sound doctrine and practice before you start confronting the errors of other teachings.
  - b. In addition, exhibit Christ-like qualities [e.g. meekness, gentleness, etc.] to win people over to obedience to Christ.
4. It is also a tremendous responsibility for Church leaders to guard the Church from the influence of false teachers and their teachings. Equally, the individual Christian should also be diligent in ensuring that he is not influenced by the false teachers.