

### **Called, Loved and Kept**

Over the last few weeks in our study in chapter 5 of Luke we have perceived the uniqueness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As you heard Jude read moments ago I hope you heard this theme again. In verse 1 Jude says 3 important things, “to those who are **called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.**” These 3 verbs - **called, beloved and kept** show the action of God towards those he saves. God by his grace “**calls**” the spiritually dead to spiritual life. “**Beloved in God**” means God has a deep love for those he calls that is not based on merit, but his agape love. “**Kept for Jesus Christ**” means no matter what assails one - God will keep believers from failing by his power because they have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Jude started his letter with a desire to confirm the security believers have in God’s electing and preserving agape love.

Who is this Jude who can make such a bold statement? He tells us at the outset, “**Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.**” We know that James was the leader of the early Jerusalem church and the half-brother of Jesus. James converted to Christianity after Jesus’ resurrection and is the writer of the earliest book in the New Testament. We read from Matthew when Jesus came and taught in his hometown of Nazareth the people responded, “**Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?**” (Matthew 13:55) The name Jude is a variation of Judas and he may have chosen to use it, just as I use Bill instead of William or maybe it was because he did not want to be associated with Judas Iscariot the traitor of Jesus. Because he is listed last in the order of brothers he is the youngest. Jude

does not consider his relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, as what is important, what was important is he is a servant of Jesus the Christ. To Jesus the human, Jude is his half-brother, but most important for Jude is he is the servant of Jesus the Messiah.

Jude begins in verse 1 saying we are kept by God for Jesus Christ and at the end of his letter in verse 24 he says, “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.” It is God who keeps us from stumbling and losing our faith. By God’s omnipotence he calls us and keeps us for Christ and keeps us from stumbling so that we will keep our faith no matter what the cost until we enter heaven or Jesus returns.

### **Faith Is Assured**

Will your occasional doubt keep you from heaven? No not according to Jude for God will kept you for Jesus Christ and other Christians are to show mercy when others doubt (v.22). When someone asks you, “How can you be sure of your salvation and that you will be faithful to the end?” You should respond, “I was spiritually dead and God called me and brought my soul to life. So, I know God loves me with an unconditional love. Because God loves me so much he created me spiritually anew and placed his Spirit in my soul and he will keep me from failing. I will not fail by God’s power and I understand I cannot rely on my own power for I am a redeemed sinner.” If fact, God loves those he has called so much, we read in Hebrews that he equips believers “with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:21) By God keeping us, we bring glory to Jesus Christ forever and ever.

Jude begins and ends his letter with assurance for every believer to know we are kept for God's glory by God Himself. However, by verse 3 Jude has a different concern. Having shown believers the electing omnipotent power of God to call, love and keep, Jude now wants us to stay vigilant for we are surrounded by danger. Jude calls us to contend or fight for our faith. Reading verse 3, [“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to \*\*contend for the faith\*\* that was once for all delivered to the saints.”](#) Jude wants us to understand this even though victory is assured that does not mean we do not have to fight or [“contend for the faith”](#). We are to fight by God's power and might and we are to fight to win – we are [“to contend for the faith.”](#)

God's keeps us so that we may have valor in battle bringing him glory. Like Jude, as servants of Christ, we are to storm the beaches and advance against the enemy - taking back territory that rightfully belongs to God. When we read Ephesians chapter 6 here is our instructions, [“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”](#) (Eph. 6:10-11) As one reads the list of [“the whole armor of God”](#) – belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit and prayer - we understand they are offensive weapons and armor. They are to be used effectively in battle. A battle like the great military battles found in history, but also a battle that is very different from a military battle. We do not spill the blood of the enemy, but use the power of God's Word with love, grace and mercy to defeat their prince, the evil one. If there is blood spilled, it is ours. Note there is no mention of any armor to protect one's back. With Christ there is no retreat – standing strong is what it means to be [“kept for Jesus Christ”](#). When people use

the security of God to **not** act, to **not** engage in battle, to **not** serve others in the power and name of Christ, well like Judas Iscariot, there may be traitors in our midst.

God gives believers confidence in salvation by his power and then he commands us to fight for the true faith and keep it pure. I believe the main point of this short letter is verse 3, “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” I believe there are 4 points to consider in this verse. **First**, at the end of the verse – there is “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” **Second**, our common salvation and faith is worth contending for. **Third**, true faith is continually threatened from within the church. **Fourth**, each believer is called to actively contend for the faith. Let me spend a few minutes on each of these.

### **Faith Delivered**

The word “faith” is used for the feeling of trust in Christ for salvation. At other times, as is here, it is used for the truths of God or “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” We believe these truths, this faith and it is about the one we trust and have surrendered our lives to. It is essential to stress that Christianity is primarily a relationship with Jesus rather than a set of ideas about Jesus. The reason we need to understand this is because believing a set of ideas saves no one. Following a set of rules or rituals saves no one. We follow the precepts of Scripture because of our love for Christ. The devil believes the truths of Christianity and yet remains unsaved. We need to stress that unless a person has a living trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, all the accepted beliefs about Christianity will not get him into heaven.

On the other extreme side of thought, if one stresses the personal relationship with Jesus beyond what is right - it leads one to deny that there is a set of truths essential to Christianity and this is a grave mistake. There are truths about God the Father and Christ, God the Son and created man and Jesus' church and the world, which are essential to living a Christian life. If these truths are lost or distorted, the result will not be merely wrong ideas but misplaced trust. The inner life of faith is not independent from the doctrinal statement of faith. When doctrine goes bad, so do hearts. There is a body of doctrine, God's truth, which must be preserved and this is the faith Jude is referring to.

The main evidence for this is in verse 3, this faith was “[delivered to the saints.](#)” This means that doctrine of faith was passed down from the apostles. The church did not think up these truths. God revealed these truths to his apostles and then they taught them to the churches as the “[whole counsel of God.](#)” This is what Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church, “[I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.](#)” (Acts 20:27)

For us one of the most important phrases in verse 3 is “[once for all.](#)” We are now 2,000 years after the faith was first delivered to the church and we are surrounded with hundreds of various religious sects and cults who claim to have a new word of revelation that now completes God's Word. Mohammed offered his Quran. Joseph Smith his Book of Mormon. Sun Moon his Divine Principle. Charles Russell rewrote the bible because God did not get it right. You meet and hear people every day who consider every contemporary intellectual trend as a suitable addition or replacement for the Bible.

Please notice very carefully. Jude taught that the faith has been “[once for all delivered to the saints](#)”. God's revelation concerning the doctrinal content of our

faith is finished. The church is built on and “you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:19-20) Anyone who comes along and claims to have a new word from God to add to the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” is teaching against God’s Scripture. They are an enemy of God and his church.

The reason we have a Bible, the divinely inspired Word of God, is that the church of the third and fourth centuries recognized that God had spoken “once for all” in these writings. The canon was closed and every other claim to truth is now measured by the standard of the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” – both the Testaments of God – the entire Bible and no more.

One other thing before we leave this first point. When Jude says there is a faith “once for all delivered to the saints”, he means **one faith** and **not faiths**. It has become fashionable to speak of many theologies in the New Testament. Scholars, theologians and denominations love to stress the diversity of viewpoints among the New Testament writers and they develop doctrines by taking scripture out of context. They claim they can straighten out these problems of the Bible by adding to God’s Word. Heretics!

There is indeed some diversity from one inspired writer to another for God used their personalities. However, I would plead to the students of Scripture to think long and hard about the implications of Jude’s verse 3 “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” Whatever diversity there is, there is only one faith, the emphasis here falls on unity, unity found in the Bible. There is only one apostolic faith. There is a body of doctrine that is the foundation of our faith. We should

not add to it or take from it. It has been “[once for all delivered to the saints](#)”. There is one God, one Bible and one faith.

### **Faith Worth Contending For**

From studying Jude, I infer that there is a body of doctrine worth contending for. Record this in your mind - there is truth faith worth contending for. There is truth worth dying for. That is hard for our culture to understand. We might be able to imagine dying to save people, but not many today consider any truths so precious they will contend for them or even die for them.

It was not always this way. The faith that we cherish was preserved for us with the blood of martyrs since Christ was resurrected. In a 3-year span in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the blood of hundreds of reformers was given for the truth of God. From 1555 to 1558, Queen Mary, the Catholic monarch of England, had 288 Protestant reformers burned at the stake - men like John Rogers, John Hooper, Rowland Taylor, John Bradford, Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer. Why were they burned? Because they stood by a truth - the truth that the real presence of Jesus’ body is not in the Eucharist blessed by a priest, but in heaven seated at the Father’s right hand. For that truth they endured the excruciating pain of being burned alive.

The blood of the martyrs is a powerful testimony that the faith “[once for all delivered to the saints](#)” is worth contending for. There is evidence of this in verse 3, Jude says, what he wanted to write about “[our common salvation](#)” he could not. Jude wrote, <sup>3</sup>“[Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.](#)” When true faith is at stake, our salvation is at stake. If the truth is lost, salvation is lost. The apostles and reformers were willing to die for the sake of the faith because they cared about

God's true message of salvation. They cared about the destination of people's souls and they cared about the glory of God and purity of his Word.

We need to gain a whole new sense of the preciousness of biblical doctrine. We need to know as a church the depth and beauty and value of the doctrinal truth. There is a faith worth contending for and I cannot begin to overemphasize the value to this church in having men who have worked their way into the unifying heart of this faith based on God's truth found in the Bible and are committed to teaching it.

### **Faith Threatened From Within**

Bloody Mary was a professing Christian not a philistine. The worst enemies of Christian doctrine are professing Christians who do not hold to the faith "[once for all delivered to the saints](#)". In his last message to the pastors of the church of Ephesus found in Acts 20, Paul warned them that after his departure "[fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and \*\*from among your own selves\*\* will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.](#)" (Acts 20:29-30) The wolves that pervert the faith are professing Christians. They are pastors and church leaders and seminary teachers and missionaries.

In Jude the reason the church needed to gird itself with the whole armor of God to "[contend for the faith](#)" is given in verse 4, "[For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.](#)" The threat to the faith is coming from among some who are now inside the church. They are probably saying something like this, "If we are saved by grace, then it does not matter what we do morally. In fact when a Christian sins, it only serves to magnify the grace of God." Or a different extreme,



one might say, “To be saved one must keep all the Jewish man-made laws and festivals of the Old Testament for believing in Christ is not enough.” They work to turn the grace of God against the commandments of Christ and in effect deny the lordship of Jesus.

That is the way it has been ever since the first century. Paul said it would happen. Jude saw it happening. He saw it as a fulfillment of the apostles’ predictions. In verses 17–19 Jude writes, “**But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.** <sup>18</sup>They said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’ <sup>19</sup>It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.” To be forewarned is to be forearmed and we are to be aware and prepared and ready to “**content for the faith**”.

As much pain as it may have cost Paul “**to content for the faith**”, all his letters have to do with contentions that he was having with those claiming to be professing Christians but believing and teaching false doctrine. So it should not surprise us if today much of our contending for the faith will be with professing Christians who teach and write things which are contrary to the faith “**once for all delivered to the saints**” found in the Bible alone. The plain New Testament teaching is that God’s true faith will be repeatedly threatened from within. Which brings us to my final point.

### **Faith Calls Believers To Contend**

Jude’s letter is not written to a pastor because verse 1 says, “**To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.**” The duty to contend for the faith as God inspired it is, therefore, not just the duty of the ordained

ministers of the Word, though they do have a special responsibility. It is the duty of every genuine believer or “[those who are called](#)”.

Verses 20 and 21 inform us of some of the things we should do to prepare ourselves to contend for the faith. Let me read them, “[But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,](#) <sup>21</sup> [keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.](#)” The best thing we can do to become a church that is effective in contending for the faith is to become a church well built on that faith. Build yourselves up in the most holy faith – study God’s Word, meditate on it and know it, so you will know if I or anyone else preaches a gospel other than the Gospel of Christ. There are many wonderful things to learn about God as one travels through the scriptures. So take, as Paul wrote, the “[sword of the Spirit, that is the word of God](#)” (Ephesians 6:17) know it, love it and wield the sword with love to separate the true from the false.

Prayer is an indispensable part of contending for the faith as verse 20 reads, “[praying in the Holy Spirit](#)”. Unless we seek the mind of the Holy Spirit in prayer, we will not grow in our understanding of the faith of the scriptures and we will be feeble contenders for the faith.

Contending for the faith is an action that each believer is to live out as verses 22 and 23 says we use the sword of the Spirit having “[mercy on those who doubt;](#) <sup>23</sup> [save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.](#)”

At least two things are evident here. One is that contending sometimes involves an intellectual effort to change the way a person thinks or as Jude says have mercy and convince “[those who doubt](#)”. Contending for the faith sometimes involves

moral renovation and you have to go after the lost and into the mess where their perverse ideas have taken them, you are to snatch them back to safety even while you hate what they are doing. The old saying, “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” In reality these two things always go together. When we make an effort to change the mind we must also change the morals. Contending for the faith is never merely an academic exercise. It is never just mental or intellectual, but involves mind, soul and heart. This is true because the source of all false doctrine is the pride of the man’s heart and not just the weakness of his mind.

This is why Jude tells us to grow and pray and stay in the love of God and depend on his mercy before he says anything about how we should contend for the faith. The best argument for the faith is when we the saints live it. This is why Peter says to believers, to you and me, “**But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,**<sup>15</sup> **but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,**<sup>16</sup> **having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”** (1 Peter 3:14-16)

Here is what I hope you take away with you: **1)** There is a faith once for all delivered to the saints found only in the Bible. **2)** Believe in this faith and be willing to contend or fight for it, even with your life. **3)** Understand that this faith will be attacked not just from the outside, but also more painfully from the inside of the church. **4)** It is the duty of every believer to enter the battle and contend or fight for the faith.