

Title: **Contenders versus Pretenders (Part 1)**

Passage: **Jude 17-19**

Theme: **How to contend for the faith all the way to the presence of His glory**

Number: **0114Ju17-19(11)**

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{Read Passage}

[i] This passage brings us all the way back to v. 3

We can draw a line from v. 3 to v. 17.

In 1 sense, those vv in between (5-16) are almost an extended parenthesis. They describe what's going on between t/thoughts of 1-4 and verses 17-23.

Go back to verse 3 {read 3-4 and jump to v. 17}

[ii] We come full circle back to contending for the faith

We have something else going on here in that regard – what I call contenders versus pretenders.

We have 2 basic classes of people addressed in this section (vv. 17-23). Simply put – saved/lost; saints/aunts; wheat/tares; elect/reprobate – Xns those who are heirs of eternal life & non-Xns those whose final destiny is an eternity in hell.

Former/Contenders: “but you, beloved” (v. 17/20) / We are those who “wait anx. for t/mercy of our Lord JC unto E.L. (v. 21)

Latter/Pretenders: “mockers who follow their own lusts” (v. 18) - w/o t/Spirit (v. 20)

Then we have vv. 22-23 - we have those who are described as “doubting” and those whom we are exhorted to “snatch out of the fire” and others who we are to “have mercy with fear” while “hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”

Doubters – struggling Xns

Those taken from t/fire – converts

Others who receive mercy with fear – those who are, from G's persp. irrevocably lost.

Perseverance of the Saints (those who are truly born again will continue in the faith to the end).

All of this with t/over-arching promise – of v. 24

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,”

Not just perseverance – preservation

[iii] This is a passage with many facets - but central to them all is this:

How to contend for the faith all the way to the presence of His glory

That's t/line, t/trajectory that goes from v. 3 (contending earnestly for the faith one for all delivered to the saints) to v. 24 (standing in the presence of His glory with great joy)

It's about contending for the faith (knowing t/truth; defending t/truth)

It's about persevering to eternal life (living t/truth).

[iv] For the believer in JC it's all about t/journey home

We are on a journey. That's a fashionable word in contemp. Xn circles. A search for t/words “journey” & “church” yields a lit. boat-load of results.

Xn life is a journey, but what kind of journey is it?

Is it like a trip on beautiful cruise ship? We just sit back and enjoy the ride as we sip exotic drinks from sun-drenched deck chairs?

Is it more like a long journey across t/country where one encounters all sorts of landscapes and seasons – t/mountains and valleys; springs and deserts; winters and summers?

As John Bunyan expressed it in allegory, that's t/more accurate picture of t/Pilgrim's Progress. Not a straight line from here to there. Not like getting on a ski-lift where you sit back and enjoy t/ride that goes in a straight line from point A to B. No, t/Xn life is marked by times of happiness & despair // rejoicing & weeping // exhilaration of crisp mountain air & t/suffocation of dry desert winds.

Journey w/many distractions – alluring yet fleeting pleasures of t/world that call out to us at every point along the way – these are the idols of pride, pleasure, prestige.

Journey that takes perseverance. Many fellow travelers, much to our dismay & our sorrow, drop out, deny t/Master, & never reach t/Celestial city.

Proverbs 13:4 **The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.**

As a dear friend of mine has written ==>

“This is as true in spiritual matters as it is in natural life. We cannot be “richly supplied” by that which we have not indulged in. And Christ is Meant to be indulged in by His people. Those who do not labor diligently to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord will not make progress. They will get nothing. Those who pursue Him gain Him. Those who sit around waiting for spiritual maturity – never grow. Each day the Spirit inclines us to seek Him – but how the tyranny of the immediate drowns out His sweet voice. “Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling” wrote the hymnist – but the world is loud and boisterous and drowns out His patient, sweet wooing of our souls to step aside and refresh ourselves in the wonder of His love and grace.” [Reid Ferguson blog article dated 1/23/14]

[v] All of this is a fitting introduction to our text

It's about contenders & pretenders // persevering in t/truth of t/once for all delivered faith // t/journey // about getting home // all that takes us from v. 3 “contend earnestly for the faith” to v. 24 “standing in t/presence of His glory blameless w/great joy.”

[vi] Preview

I. Safeguards Against Spiritual Suicide (vv. 17-21)

II. Sorting Through Spiritual Sickness (vv. 22-23)

A. The Sick:

B. The Dying:

C. The Dead:

Find your way back to v. 17 – First Main Point ==>

I. Safeguards Against Spiritual Suicide (vv. 17-21)

Those who oppose & deny t/faith commit spiritual suicide.

This applies to all false teachers. Those whom Jude describes in v. 4 (verse 4 is a preview of what follows in verses 5-16) ==>

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.

False religionists ==>

1. Have infiltrated the church
2. Cannot escape judgment
3. Are rebels against grace
4. Deny the Lord with their lives

Those who oppose & deny t/faith commit spiritual suicide.

Add: So do their followers.

There are those who flat out teach heresy.

There are those who listen and believe them.

There are those who are sympathetic. Dangerous category all its own. I've seen many over the years who began to sympathize w/a false gospel who eventually went on to embrace a false gospel.

Jude may have these in mind in v. 22.

We need ==>

I. Safeguards Against Spiritual Suicide (vv. 17-21)

- Key Word: "Transformation"

Romans 12:2 **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

2 Corinthians 3:18 **But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**

This is summed up in discipleship. What it means 2B a follower of JC.

A. Remember Sound Words (17-19)

B. Remain in God's Love (20-21)

A. Remember Sound Words (17-19)

But you, beloved,

Who are those who will remember sound words but those who have ears to hear? “Beloved”? ((Some translations “dear friends”))

As we see in v. 1: Jude writes to those who are

beloved in God the Father

Saw it again in v. 3 “beloved”

We see it 2x in our passage (here in v. 17 and again in v. 20)

A. Remember Sound Words (17-19)

But you, beloved, must remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. What were the words they were to remember?

That's in v. 18 ==>

that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will be mockers pursuing their own ungodly passions.”

a. This is what Peter wrote about

2 Peter 3:3 **Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,**

(1) These are the only two places we find these specific words

But general sentiment is evident t/o t/NT. Have all kinds of warnings

At Ephesus, Paul warned of the “savage wolves” that would come in to destroy the flock and distort the truth (Acts 20:29–30).

He sounded similar warnings to Timothy ==>

1 Timothy 4:1 . . . the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 Timothy 3:1–5 1 . . . realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

2 Timothy 4:3–4 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

I. Safeguards Against Spiritual Suicide (vv. 17-21)

A. Remember Sound Words (17-19)

But you, beloved, must remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, [iterative imperfect] “In the last time there will be mockers pursuing their own ungodly passions.”

9 yrs. ago a film was rel. that won an award for best documentary: “March of t/Penguins” - a movie about how Emperor Penguins yearly march a distance of 60 miles across t/antarctic in order to survive.

Equal in their determination are those whom Jude describes – what we could call the “March of the Mockers.” Those who pursue ==> . . . **their own ungodly passions.**

2. “Mockers” (ἐμπικαιτης) - 2 Peter 3:3 = only other NT use
Childish mockery; mischief-maker; ridicules, scorns.

a. More common concept in Hebrew –

See it often in t/OT where it's generally translated “scoffer.”

Psalm 1:1 **HOW blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!**

(1) There's an underlying attitude of pride and foolishness

Describes someone who's a know it all and is not teachable (opposite of a “disciple”)

Proverbs 9:7–8 **7 He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, . . . 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you . . .**

Proverbs 13:1 . . . **a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.**

Proverbs 14:6 **A scoffer seeks wisdom, and finds none . . .**

Proverbs 19:29 **Judgments are prepared for scoffers, And blows for the back of fools.**

Luther: “They are neither under an external nor an internal government, neither under divine nor human control. They float about between heaven and earth in their lust, just as the devil leads them.”

3. Threefold Description of them in verse 19 ==>

These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly, without the Spirit.

a. Divisive

Cause divisions in the church. It's error that divides.

Unity has to be grounded in truth. Admit - truth can be divisive. Good and bad.

Truth that divides out of Necessity.

{examples}

Truth that divides Needlessly.

We must contend for the faith, but we don't always need to contend against one another in t/CH.

(1) "Which doctrines are we to contend for?"

Dr. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Seminary, writes ==>

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.

Again - 1 thing to be divided by truth, these false teachers were causing division by teaching error.

Some were following them // siding with them.

Others were “doubting” (cf. 22-23).

Fruit of the flesh, not the Spirit ==>

Galatians 5:20 . . . enmities, strife, . . . disputes, dissensions, factions,

b. Worldly (ψυχικός = natural, unspiritual, physical) – a word that's notoriously difficult to render into English

Worldly / Worldly-Minded (NASB; ESV; RSV)

Natural / Follow Natural Instincts (NIV)

Sensual (KJV)

HCSB ==> “These people create divisions and are unbelievers, not having the Spirit.”

To be ψυχικός is the opposite of what it means to be πνευματικός "spiritual" or of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But a ψυχικός natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

c. Devoid of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:9 ... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

They are not regenerate.

A. Remember Sound Words (17-19)

1 Timothy 6:3 warns anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,

Why we need to remember / reminders.

In theology we speak of the “noetic” effects of sin (nous – Gk. word for mind).

The Fall has impacted our ability to retain k. – k. of spiritual things.

Bishop Ussher, in his “Body of Divinity” catechized on this issue. The effects of the first sin by our parents, Adam and Eve. He wrote that when sin entered we suffered *“The loss of the perfection of the Image of God, and the corruption of nature, in Man called original sin.”* He went on to show that this corruption shows itself in us in 6 ways .

“Q. What is the first?

A. The blindness of the Understanding; which is not able to conceive the things of God.

Q. What is the second?

A. The forgetfulness of the memory; unfit to remember good things.

Q. What is the third?

A. The rebellion of the Will; which is wholly bent to sin, and altogether disobedient unto the will of God.

Q. What is the fourth?

A. Disorder of the Affections, of Joy, heaviness, love, anger, fear, and such like.

Q. What is the fifth?

A. Fear and confusion in the Conscience; condemning where it should not, and excusing where it should condemn.

Q. What is the sixth?

A. Every member of the body is become a ready instrument to put sin in execution.”

Note #2 in his list: *“The forgetfulness of the memory; unfit to remember good things.”*

Quote another ==>

This is why we simply cannot sustain a healthy spiritual life on diet of one worship service on a Sunday morning. Because we do not retain it. Nature itself is designed to reinforce this reality in requiring us to take in physical nourishment several times a day – not just once a week. And if our bodies need that nourishment over and over just to maintain life, how much more our souls when the world around us is toxic to spiritual life and seeks to rob us of it at every turn.

Believer, we do not stress the need for prayer and Bible study privately, and teaching of the word more than once a week because we are trying to meet some hidden quota imagined to make sure we are “doing enough”. We press it because in our fallen condition, we need to be drinking at the fountain and feasting at that table over and over, or we cannot grow or sustain any kind of true spiritual health and vitality.

The glory, the wonder of it all is that our Christ and Savior is beckoning us to Himself all the time. Never too busy. Never distracted. Never unwilling to meet us and break bread with us afresh. If we are not refreshed in Him, if He seems distant and spiritual comforts escape us – we must ask if we have even made the effort to meet with Him in prayer or the Word? And if not, then hear the Master call again today “Come and dine!” He will receive you and meet with you as though you had never been away. [Reid Ferguson blog article dated 1/23/14, citing James Usher, *A Body of Divinity: Or, the Sum and Substance of Christian Religion* (Eighth Edition.; London: R. J.; Jonathan Robinson; A. and J. Churchill; J. Taylor; J. Wyatt, 1702), 477]

I. Safeguards Against Spiritual Suicide (vv. 17-21) - Transformation

A. Remember Sound Words (17-19)

B. Remain in God's Love (20-21)