

Session 1

December 1, 2019

DO WE NEED TO DEFEND OUR FAITH?

Jude 1-4, 20-25

So where is the balance between the biblical principles of “turning the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39) and “always being ready to give a defense” (1 Pet. 3:15) when it comes to our faith? Standing up for the faith is nothing new. Through the years, the Christian church has been maligned, ridiculed, ignored, attacked, accused, accosted and belittled. And yet we have thrived. Through the centuries, before kings and magistrates, followers of Christ have taken a stand to defend not only themselves, but their Lord, His word, and His church. One great example of that is Paul’s defense before king Agrippa in Acts 26. Another is found in our lesson this week.

The attacks we face (vv. 1-4). Jude is considered by most to be the brother of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 13:55). He introduces himself with three descriptions: Jude; a servant of Christ; and the brother of James. His letter is addressed to the local body, also described three ways: those who are called (by the Holy Spirit), loved (by God the Father), and secured (by Jesus Christ, the Son) (v. 1). His opening statement is noteworthy. The *common salvation* (KJV) is the salvation shared by all. In other words, Jude fully intended to write another gospel account! But God led him in another direction. Rather than a fifth gospel, Jude *found it necessary* (v. 3) to send a letter warning the church of attack from those who would destroy it and encouraging the church to earnestly *contend* (“boldly defend;” “be willing to fight on behalf of”) the faith. While the central issue addressed is doctrinal heresy promoted by false teachers, the idea of *the faith* is broader, referring to what we have been taught, what we believe, and what we hold dear. The attackers Jude warns against are harshly characterized in verse 4: they have quietly and stealthily crept into the church; they are ungodly; they have perverted the concept of God’s grace for their own gain; and they have denied the deity and lordship of Christ. *Obviously, these kinds of attacks are ongoing today, by those who would malign the veracity of God’s Word and deny the deity of God’s Son.*

The activities we need (vv. 20-23). In the intervening verses, Jude criticized and condemned the apostates who infiltrated the church and sought to destroy the faith. In verses 20-23, he gives guidelines for the believer’s response to the dangers of false teachers who would mislead us and skeptics who would attack us. Nine specific actions are in order:

²⁰ But you, dear friends, as you (1) build yourselves up in your most holy faith and (2) pray in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ (3) keep yourselves in the love of God, (4) expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life. ²² (5) Have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ (6) save others by snatching them from the fire; (7) have mercy on others but with fear, (8) hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

The “But you” indicates that believers are to be quite different in our interactions with the skeptics than they are with us. *Our response, in every case, is one of compassion and mercy, seasoned with prayer, and directed toward the salvation of souls. And all of that is predicated on strengthening our own faith (v. 20).*

The assurance we have (vv. 24-25). So what assurances do we have that we really can take a stand for our faith in the face of attack? Jude mentions two. First, the believer can be assured that our rock-solid faith is built upon the Rock that is Christ (see Matt. 7:24-27). He will secure us and protect us from stumbling (v. 24). Second, he assures us that Christ Himself will make us to stand in the presence of His glory. *Knowing we will stand blameless and with joy in His presence there, assures us that we can stand against anything the skeptics might throw at us while here.*