

# *How To Survive Triumphantly In A Time Of Apostasy*

Lesson #44 Dec. 16, 2020

II Cor. 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Wiersbe: Great Wall of China was penetrated at least three times by the enemy, and each time the guards were bribed! A strong defense depends on strong people.

This applies to spiritual battles as well as military contests.

Consider: If the church is to oppose and defeat the false teachers, then ALL in the church must be strong and able to "stand against the wiles of the devil" [Eph. 6:11].

Why? Always the danger of stumbling [Jude 1:2]. A stumble is the first step toward a fall.

## *YOU DON'T HAVE TO STUMBLE*

Jude gives 4 instructions so you can stand firm and resist the apostates.

### 1. Remember God's Word Jude 1:17

But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

- From the very beginning, Satan has attacked the Word of God. "Yea, hath God said?" was his opening statement when he led Eve into disobedience in the garden [Gen. 3:1].

Once we begin to question God's Word, we are vulnerable to Satan's other attacks, for only the truth of God's Word can protect us from the lies of the devil.

Isa. 8:20 "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"

### 2. Remember Who Gave The Word Jude 1:17

Jesus selected only a few to be apostles, "one who is sent with a commission." In order to qualify, a believer had to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ [Acts 1:21-22; I Cor. 9:1]. The apostles lived with Christ during His ministry, learned from Him, and were sent by Him into all the world to carry the good news of salvation.

Truth: Wherever there is the authentic, the counterfeit will appear.

As false apostles and teachers began to appear in the early church, it was necessary to develop a system to protect the church against false prophecies and forged letters.

Since Christ had committed "the faith" [Jude 1:3] to His apostles, one of the main tests in the early church was, "Is this what the apostles taught?" When the church assembled the New Testament books, it was required that each book be written either by an apostle or by someone closely associated with an apostle.

John MacArthur: Historic Protestantism is grounded in the conviction that the canon is closed. No "new" revelation is necessary because Scripture is complete and absolutely sufficient. Scripture itself is clear that the day of God's speaking directly to His people through various

prophetic words and visions is past. The truth God has revealed in Christ including the complete New Testament Canon is His final word. [Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 1:3; Rev. 22:18-19]

Whenever somebody offers you a "new revelation," test it by what the apostles wrote and by what Jesus Christ taught. You will soon discover that the "revelation" is a lie.

### 3. Remember What They Said

Jude 1:18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

In these last days, mockers would come who would deny the Word of God.

Jude echoed what Peter had written [II Peter 3:3ff].

Paul and John warned about the apostates. [I Tim. 4; II Tim. 3; I John 2:18ff.; 4:1-6].

❖ When a warning is given so many times, it behooves us to take it seriously!

Why do the apostates deny God's truth? They want to satisfy their own sinful desires.

The Word of God condemns their selfish way of life. Before Satan can substitute his own lies, he must get rid of the truth of God's Word. If he cannot argue it away, he will laugh it away.

### 4. Remember Why They Said It

Jude 1:19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Acts 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

False teachers divide and deceive the church because they are "sensual, having not the Spirit."

❖ Sensual = opposite of "spiritual."

❖ In I Cor. 2:14-16, Paul used this word. It is translated as "natural."

❖ Greek word is psukikos, which means "soul-ish."

❖ Because the false teachers do not have the Spirit of God, they must function on their natural "soul power" alone.

❖ Just as there was "false fire" in the tabernacle [Lev. 10, so there is "false fire" today in the church; therefore we must exercise careful discernment.

Question: How can we discern between the "soul-ish" and the "spiritual"?

➤ By using the Word of God which is able to divide soul and spirit [Heb. 4:12]

➤ By paying close attention to the witness of the Spirit of God within [Rom. 8:16].

A "soul-ish" ministry magnifies man, but the Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ. When the Spirit is ministering through the Word, there is edification; but when the soul is merely "manufacturing" a ministry, there is entertainment or, at best, only intellectual education.

Jude: Remember:

➤ There is a faith once delivered to the saints.

➤ There is a faith worth contending and dying for.

➤ There is a faith continually threatened from within.

➤ There is a faith every believer should prepare to contend for.

## *Preparing To Contend: Build Your Christian Life*

Four key actions will arm us for this battle. 1. Building 2. Praying 3. Keep 4. Waiting  
Jude 1:20-21: "But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith;  
praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God,  
looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

1. Building up yourself: Become grounded in the faith > study, meditate, grow.

The apostates are in the business of tearing down, but each Christian must be involved in building up—first, his own spiritual life and then his local assembly.

The foundation for our Christian life is our "most holy faith" [Jude 1:20], which is the same as "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" [Jude 1:3].

Ps. 127:1 Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it:

❖ Keep pressing on to grow spiritually. Continual action

Heb. 5:12-14 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. <sup>13</sup> For everyone that uses milk is unskilfull in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup> But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Heb. 6:1a Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection - Let us press on to maturity...

A big part of spiritual development involves reading and studying God's Word so that we know, understand and obey it.

II Tim. 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. See II Tim. 3:16-17

- Study = to make haste, hence to give diligence

God's inspired Word has the power to teach doctrine, train, rebuke, and correct us in righteousness so that as God's servants we are wholly equipped for every good work  
The members of the Chinese church used to have a saying, "No Bible—no breakfast!"

2. Praying in the Holy Spirit [Jude 1:20b]

What does it mean to "pray in the Holy Spirit"? It means to pray according to the leading of the Spirit. [Note the contrast with Jude 1:19— "having not the Spirit."]

The POWER for building the Christian life comes from praying under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We receive help in our human weakness to understand God's truth and not be deceived by false teachers. [Rom. 8:26]

- Prayer is indispensable in contending for the faith. Unless we seek the mind of the Holy Spirit in prayer, we will not grow in our grasp of the faith. Result = Weak Contender

Consider: If all we do is read and study the Bible, we will have a great deal of light, but not much power. However, if we concentrate on prayer and ignore the Bible, we may be guilty of zeal without knowledge.

I John 5:14-15 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Eph. 1:15ff Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and knowledge from the Word.

Eph. 2:18 Holy Spirit can help us approach the Father through the access in Jesus Christ.

Phil. 3:3 We worship God in the Spirit.

Zech. 12:10 Holy Spirit motivates us to pray. He is the "Spirit of grace and of supplications."

Key: The "building process" involves the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and prayer.

### 3. Keep Yourself In God's Love [Jude 1:21a]

- We grow in our love for God as we listen to His Word, obey it and delight in doing what pleases Him. Staying in God's love means living by faith and obedience to God.

I John 2:5a "But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

John 15:10 Jesus told us: If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

- We obey God because He has captivated our hearts and won our allegiance. [Rom. 6:17]

I Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

We build our Christian life on the foundation of faith and through the motivation of love.

### 4. Waiting With Hope Jude 1:21b

Jude says to wait "expectantly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life."

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;

Earnestly Expect: attitude of life that is motivated by the promise of our Lord's return.

- I John 3:3 Keep pure
- Phil. 3:17-21 Avoid the things of the flesh and the world
- Heb. 6:19 Our hope in Christ is like an anchor that holds us in the storms of life
- Isa. 41:10 Do not fear; Do not be dismayed; I will strengthen you
- I Thess. 5:8 Our hope in Christ is like a helmet that protects us in life's battles.

Key: Jude tells us to grow, pray, stay in the love of God and depend on His mercy before he says anything about how to contend for the faith.

- Best argument for the faith = when the saint lives it

I Pet. 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

- The way you contend is as important as the content of your argument.
- You can win with your logic but lose with your life.

## *Nurturing Others & Exercising Spiritual Discernment*

Jude 1:22-23 And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Note: Pray for discernment

Phil. 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may increase and abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; [scriptural understanding]

Col. 1:9-11 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup> That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Consider: If Christians would seek the wisdom of God in the Word of God, they would not stumble into the traps of the false teachers but would walk to please the Lord.

### Three Kinds of People Who Need Spiritual Help

#### 1. The Doubting or Wavering

II Pet. 2:14b beguiling unstable souls [Context = immature believers who tend to be led astray]

Unstable souls = converted but not grounded in their faith

- Immature believers are like children who think they know right from wrong.
- Have mercy on them; show compassion
- Seek to lead them away from the influence of apostates
- Good way to draw them away from false teachers = Magnify all they have in Christ; Make their salvation so wonderful and the Word so exciting they will lose interest in the false teachings.

Remember: False teachers prey on disgruntled and immature believers.

- Paul sent Timothy to the young believers in Thessalonica so he might establish them in their faith. [I Thess. 2]
- EVERY young Christian needs a more mature believer to teach him how to stand and walk.

#### 2. The Burning      Jude 1:23 Pulling Them Out Of The Fire

Apparently, these are the people who have left the fellowship and are now a part of the apostate group. They need to be snatched out of the fire! The angels took Lot by the hand and pulled him out of Sodom [Gen. 19:16] Sometimes that must be done in order to rescue ignorant and unstable believers from the clutches of false teachers.

#### 3. The Dangerous

Jude 1:23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. [With fear = with caution]

In trying to help those who have erred, we must be careful not to be trapped ourselves! Many a would-be rescuer has been drowned himself.

Satan can use him to defile us. In trying to save him, we may be stained or burned ourselves!  
Truth: Stronger believers must never think they are beyond satanic influence. Even while serving the Lord and seeking to rescue one of His children, we can become defiled by those we want to help.

Not every Christian is equipped to deal with false teachers or with those they have influenced and captured. It takes a good knowledge of the Word, a faithful walk with God, an understanding of Satan's devices, and certainly the fullness of the Spirit of God. It also demands spiritual discernment. It is much easier to instruct new Christians and keep them away from the false teachers than it is to snatch them out of the fire.

A chiasm is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated *in reverse order*. The result is a "mirror" effect as the ideas are "reflected" back in a passage. Chiastic patterns in the Bible are just one more example of the richness and complexity of God's inspired Word.

Jude had a severe message to deliver to believers.

He begins and ends his book with ASSURANCE for the believer.

➤ <u>Assurance for the Christian</u>	A	1-2
➤ The Believer & The Faith	B	3
➤ Apostates Described	C	4
➤ Apostasy in OT History	D	5
➤ Apostasy in the Supernatural Realm	E	9-10
➤ <i>An ancient Trio of Apostates</i>		11
➤ Apostasy in the Natural Realm	E	12-13
➤ Apostasy in OT Prophecy	D	14-16
➤ Apostasy Described	C	17-19
➤ The Believer & The Faith	B	20-23
➤ <u>Assurance for the Christian</u>	A	24-25

Jude is very impressed with God's capacity to keep us in His ways than with the enemy's attempts to divert us. His final song of praise exudes great joy and confidence!

### Commit Yourself To Jesus Christ

Jude 1:24-25 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup> To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

He alone is able to guard us, He alone is able to guard us if we are willing! My Part? V. 20-21

- Building up myself on my most holy faith
- Praying in the Holy Spirit
- Keep myself in the love of God
- Waiting with hope; earnestly anticipating His return

Someday, Satan will find nothing to accuse. The bride will be arrayed in the righteousness of Christ to the glory of God. Knowing this, the believer has a strong motive for living for Christ and obeying His Word. This is the significance of:

I John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

- Heb. 12:2 Jesus Christ will have the special joy of presenting His bride, the church, before the Father's throne! It was the anticipation of this "joy" that enabled Him to endure the sufferings of the cross.
- Eph. 1:6, 12, 14 Grand purpose of salvation is that God may be glorified for all eternity

What a magnificent doxology this is! Jude was reminding his readers of the greatness of Jesus Christ. If only they could catch that, they would never be led astray by false teachers. The believer who keeps himself "in the love of God" (Jude 21), caught up in the glories of the Savior, will never want to turn to Satan's substitutes. If you will remember the Word, build your Christian life in faith, hope, and love, exercise spiritual discernment, and commit yourself to Christ, then He will keep you from stumbling.

The only wise God your Savior will keep you safe and one day present you joyfully in glory!

What do we do to fulfill Jude's exhortation? Paul's last letter gives the answer.

II Timothy gives the answer to our question about guarding the Gospel,

1:14: "Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you." He tells us exactly what it looks like in any century to contend earnestly for the faith.

The early church was facing trouble on two fronts.

1. Christians Were Under Tremendous Attack.

- ❖ 64 AD, a fire broke out in Rome that raged for 6 days and 7 nights, totally destroying a great part of the city.
- ❖ Emperor Nero falsely charged the Christians and punished them with "the most exquisite tortures," as the historian, Tacitus, records in his *Annals*:

They were covered with the hides of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and, when day declined, burned to serve for nocturnal lights.

2. In the midst of this extreme physical persecution of the church, Paul warned of a pervasive godlessness coming in the culture:

II Tim. 3:1-4 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

<sup>2</sup> For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

<sup>4</sup> Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Timothy would also face trouble in the church.

II Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

<sup>4</sup> And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

## Paul's Simple Solution

II Tim. 3:14 "You, however, continue..."

Paul does not tell Timothy to look forward to any new movements of the Spirit, any fresh word from God, or any insider's spiritual fad. He points not to future, but rather to the past.

"Timothy, don't look forward," he says. "Look backward."

II Tim. 3:14-17 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

<sup>15</sup> And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

<sup>16</sup> All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

<sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Paul amps it up another notch and challenges Timothy with his most sober language.

II Tim. 4:1-2, 5 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and His Kingdom;

<sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. <sup>5</sup>But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Guard the Gospel by *continuing* in the truth already revealed.

But that is not enough: **PASSING THE BATON**

Paul passed the baton of the Gospel to a faithful individual, a young man named Timothy, and then told him to do the same: II Tim. 2:2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

➤ Continue in the Truth. Hand the Truth down.

➤ Guarding the Gospel is not complete until it has been passed on effectively.

Paul told Timothy in II Tim. 2:5 "If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules." We cannot drop the baton, either. If we do, we lose.

### *Finishing the Race*

The key to contending for the faith—to surviving the spiritual onslaught of the 21st century—is to guard the Gospel. The key to that is found in two simple phrases.

1. "Continue in the things you have learned."

Back to the basics. Back to the Word as it has been entrusted to us.

2. Entrust it to faithful disciples who will be able to teach others also.

Proclaim the truth faithfully, guard it diligently, and pass it on carefully.

Not until we do that can we say what Paul said at the end of his magnificent letter: II Tim. 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup> To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.