



“Stand Fast”

Jude 17-25

Idea: Actively persevere in the fight for the faith.

Intro: Read Jude 3-4.

The Great Wall of China is the world’s longest wall and the largest ancient architectural structure. It was constructed more than 2,300 years ago and finished during the Ming Dynasty. Its winding path over rugged country, steep mountains, and desert stretches over 13,000 miles. It has an average height between 20-23 feet with the tallest portion of the wall towering 46 feet into the air. The width of the wall in some places is wide enough to drive a car along the top. It is an enormous structure and clearly one of the great accomplishments of antiquity. A wall like that is utterly impenetrable. I learned this past week, however, that the Great Wall of China was breached at least three times by the enemy, and each time the guards were bribed.

A strong defense depends on strong people, and this applies to military contests as well as spiritual battles. If the church is to “*contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints,*” then all of us in the church must be strong and able to “*stand against the schemes of the devil*” (Eph 6:11). We always face the danger of stumbling (Jude 24), and a stumble is the first step to a fall. So how can we as believers practically contend for the truth so that we will be victorious in a day of rampant falsehood? How can we apply Jude’s cautions to our lives and ministry? The answer is found in our passage today.

Read Jude 17-25.

Inquiry: We are in a three-week study through the short letter of Jude. This early church leader was a half-brother of Jesus. And he called believers to “*contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*” The greatest threat to the Church is not and has never come from outside but from within the church. It is not governmental or societal persecution and pressure that harms the church. In fact those often strengthen and expand the influence of the church. Tertullian wrote in the second century, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” The greatest threat to the church has always been false teaching. It’s subtlety and severity make it a spiritual poison unlike any other. Jude wrote his letter to believers to encourage them to stand strong against the spiritual deceptions that threatened to wreak havoc in their church. He also wanted to expose the false teachers and their heresy. He called believers to stand. We too must stand. So far we have heard Jude’s call for believers to stand up and combat perversion. We have also heard his call to stand back as we trust in the justice of God against those who seek to harm and destroy the Church. Today, in our final passage, we will

hear his call to stand fast. Again, this is not a call to passivity. No, it is a call for calm and assertive trust in God's faithfulness to His Word and His character. Many times it is helpful to see an example.

The greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible. Let me give you some biblical examples of standing fast.

- Israel crossing the Red Sea (Ex 14:13-14)
- Fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:1-5)
- Gideon defeats Midian (Judges 6:12; 7:22)

These faithful men of God did not passively set back on their spiritual haunches. No, they were engaged in the fight, but they understood the Lord was fighting for them and with them. Jude presents us with four instructions on how to stand fast and contend for the faith against those who seek to destroy it.

1. Expect Worldly Attacks. (vs. 17-19)

Satan has been attacking God's Word and God's people from the very beginning (Gen 3). His greatest tactic has been to question the veracity of God's Word. This is what he did with Eve in the Garden. He knows that once a person begins to question God's Word then that person is vulnerable to other attacks because only the truth of the Word can protect from the lies of the devil.

Jude's call to stand fast begins with a call to remember what Jesus has said through His apostles. Who were the apostles? The term means "one who is sent with a commission." To qualify as an apostle, a believer had to be a personal witness of the resurrected Christ and be personally sent out by Jesus. There are only a handful of men who are identified as apostles in the New Testament (Peter, Paul, James, John, etc). These men spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the Lord. They established the church through the preaching of the gospel and their scriptural teaching. Therefore, there are no apostles today.

There is a principle at play in this passage. Wherever you find the authentic, you will likewise find a counterfeit.

Illust: It always makes me uncomfortable when I go into the gas station to pay for my fuel and the attendant takes out a marker to validate my \$50 bill. The reason they have to check my authentic bill is because someone is printing and using counterfeit bills. I just know that one day, I will end up with a fake bill.

There were counterfeit teachers threatening the early church. Jude reminded his audience that the apostles had predicted this threat. One way to combat the threat was to weigh their teaching against that of the apostles. Apostolic teaching was and still is the test of truth.

The worldly attacks largely come from two fronts. False teachers attempt to argue away the truth, or they try to laugh it away. Jude reminds them that the apostles predicted that scoffers/mockers (ἐμπαικτης) would seek to cause division in the church. They laugh off the Word of God.

If we are going to stand fast and contend for the faith, we first must expect worldly attacks against our faith. We dare not be surprised when it happens, and it should not disillusion us. Instead, we ought to expect the jabs.

Illust: One of my favorite movie series is Rocky. In every major fight, Rocky's opponent seems to have the upper-hand. Between rounds Mickey, Apollo Creed, or Duke coach Rocky on where to strike and how to defend himself. The coaching and prediction in the end enables Rocky to win the fight.

The first instruction on how to stand fast and contend for the faith is to expect worldly attacks. The second is...

2. Encourage Spiritual Growth. (vs. 20-21)

Your Christian life must never stand still. Likewise, our collective Christian life as a church must never stand still. There is no such thing as plateaued Christianity. Neither is there a plateaued church. You're either moving forward or backwards.

Illust: There is a house in my neighborhood that has been vacant for several months. You might think that since no one lives there that it is in better shape now than if a family occupied it. But that is not true. A house left to itself falls apart. The elements of nature will steadily take over, which is evident in this house.

Read Jude 20.

“*Building...up*” (ἐποικοδομέω) – This present, active participle has an imperatival sense to it. In other words, Jude makes it clear that spiritual growth in the life of the believer who is standing fast is not an option.

How do believers encourage spiritual growth in their lives? We must understand that there is a personal as well as a corporate component to the equation. I am responsible for encouraging spiritual growth within myself and also responsible for encouraging growth in others.

There are four ingredients for spiritual growth presented here. They are:

1) The Word of God

Your most holy faith refers to the objective faith of verse 3. A healthy diet of the Word of God is central to spiritual growth. I have yet to meet a strong, fruitful Christian who ignores his or her Bible. Therefore, we must daily devote ourselves to reading and studying the Bible, seeking the mind of God. We don't study for information but for transformation.

2) Prayer

Praying in the Holy Spirit refers to praying for that which is consistent with the Spirit's desires, directives, and decrees. The Holy Spirit reveals how we ought to practically live out the will of God for our lives, which is found in the Word of God. Prayer provides the power for living the Christian life. The reading of the Word of God should be coupled with prayer. If all we do is study the Word, we will have a great deal of light, but not much power. If we concentrate on prayer and ignore the Bible, we may be guilty of zeal without knowledge. One without the other creates a spiritual limp in our lives.

3) Abiding in God's love

“*Keep yourselves in the love of God*” doesn't mean, “Keep yourselves saved.” Jesus is keeping believers in the faith according to Jude 1. Abiding in God's love involves enjoying the fellowship of God and His love. This is much like the enjoyment that is experienced within the marriage relationship. However, it involves more than that. Abiding in God's love largely involves obeying God's Word.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

– John 15:10

4) Hoping in Christ's return

Hope is crucial to one's spiritual growth. Our eyes must ever be lifted heavenward.

waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ... – Titus 2:13

We should have a hopeful expectation of the Lord's return as we await the Lord's mercy. God's mercy is found in salvation, but it is also found in His deliverance of the Church from the evil of this world.

We expect worldly attacks. We encourage spiritual growth. Jude's third instruction is:

3. Employ Gospel Conversations. (vs. 22-23)

There will be some who are drawn away from the truth by false teachers. How should we respond to those who are led astray? Jude calls for mercy from believers toward three different kinds of people in need of spiritual help.

1) Doubters

These are the people who are wavering. They are "unsteady souls" (2 Pet 2:14). They are genuinely converted followers of Jesus, but they are not yet grounded in the faith. Our responsibility is to have mercy on them by seeking to lead them away from the influences of the apostates. They need discipleship. It will require love and patience. We must see them as immature believers who will think they know what is best.

The way to lead them toward maturity is to magnify all they have in Christ and share His love for them in practical ways.

2) Deserters

These seem to be people who have already left the fellowship of the church. They need to be snatched out of the fire. This requires that believers go after the ones who have deserted the church, using the same techniques and care as with the doubters.

3) Dangerous

"show mercy with fear" – This speaks of using caution. When we attempt to help those who have fallen prey to doctrinal error, we must be careful to not become trapped ourselves.

Illust: When someone is drowning, one of the most dangerous things you can do is rescue them. Many would be rescuers have been drowned by the very ones they attempted to save.

Never think you are immune to satanic influence. Never think that you are incapable of falling away. Should we attempt to rescue the dangerous if there is a risk of spiritual harm? Yes, but you should not do it alone. There is accountability and support in numbers.

In each of these situations we should employ gospel conversations. We want to have an ongoing conversation with them about Jesus and His Word. This leads to a fourth instruction.

4. Entrust Yourself to Jesus. (vs. 24-25)

This great benediction contains a wealth of spiritual truth for the believer. If we want to keep our feet on the ground spiritually, walk straight, and not stumble, then we must entrust ourselves to Jesus. He alone is able to keep you from stumbling and falling away. This requires:

- Unconditional surrender

Surrender sounds like the antithesis of standing fast. The truth, however, is that we can never stand fast against the schemes of the devil on our own. The archangel Michael didn't even dare

stand on his own against Satan (vs. 9). He called in the support of Almighty God as he walked in surrender to the Lord. We too must unconditional surrender to Jesus.

- **Biblical fidelity**
We contend for the faith. This is God's Word given to man. There is power in it, which means there is no power without it. We must remain true to all of God's Word.
- **Devotional walk**
The fellowship Adam and Eve had with God in the Garden is the devotional walk with God we seek. It is intimate, honest, and life-giving.

Evangelist Billy Sunday used to tell new believers they needed to do three things in their devotional life: talk to God in prayer, listen to God from His Word, and talk to others about God. That is pretty good advice.

How is your devotional walk?

Conclusion: The men of Troy had battled against the Mycenaeans and Greeks for ten years. It had been a brutal and costly war with the Greeks sieging the walls of the great city without success. Many great fighters had been lost in the fight such as Achilles and Hector. The conflict began after Prince Paris of Troy eloped with Helen the queen of Sparta, and brought her back with him to Troy. Helen's husband Menelaus convinced his brother Agamemnon to lead an expedition to retrieve her.

The siege had been largely unsuccessful due to Troy's impenetrable walls. Finally, after ten years of conflict, the Greeks retreated from their camp, leaving only a large wooden horse outside the gates of Troy. After much debate, the Trojans pulled the mysterious gift into the city. When night fell, the horse opened up and a group of Greek warriors, led by Odysseus, climbed out and sacked the city of Troy from within. Nothing had been able to penetrate the high, thick walls of Troy during the ten-year war until the day they opened their gates to the horse.

Whether you realize it or not there is an army of destruction that is all around us. It is deceptive. It is dangerous. It is evil. It seeks to destroy our faith. It wants to divide and conquer our lives, families, relationships, and church. God is our refuge and defense (Ps 46). He is our high wall and thick gates. Nothing can penetrate His protection unless we open the gates. The Great Wall of China protected the Chinese against the aggressive Genghis Khan and the Mongols until the day that a guard took a bribe and opened a gate.

Church, let us be a people who stand up and combat perversion of the Word. Let us stand back and rest in God's justice. And let us stand fast as we expect worldly attacks, encourage spiritual growth, employ gospel conversations, and entrust ourselves to Jesus. Remember that this will require our unconditional surrender to Jesus. It will require biblical fidelity. And it will require a vibrant devotional walk with Jesus.

How are you doing?