

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## 1, 2 & 3 JOHN AND JUDE LESSON 4 (Jude)

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Welcome to our study of the Book of Jude. Jude is a unique book in Scripture in that its message is aggressive and militant. Jude tells us to spiritually “take up arms” in order to defend the faith and do battle against error. It is clear from Scripture that Christians cannot be pacifists when the Gospel is being spoken against. When people are teaching error, and when things are being said about the Bible and Christian doctrine that are not true, Christians cannot sit back and allow those types of things to go on. Jude says that we must stand up and contend earnestly for the faith.

There is an emergency here—a real problem that Jude needs Christians to see so that they can stand up for the truth. In Jude 3 and 4 we read,

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jude says that he **wanted** to write about a common salvation and about the faith that Christians share. **Instead**, he had to write to exhort, motivate, and compel Christians to contend earnestly for the faith. The word “contend” is a unique word that means “to do strenuous battle, to wrestle, to give your best effort to defeat the opponent.” We are to “contend earnestly.” But what for? For “the faith.” The emergency is that there is only one faith. There is only one Gospel system of faith by which people can be saved. Acts 6:7 tells us that “a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” There is but one faith (Eph. 4:5). And that one faith is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Rom. 1:16-17). There is only one faith. It is the common salvation that all who have obeyed the Gospel correctly possess. In Acts 4:12 we learn that that faith teaches that there is only one name by which a person can be saved: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” This is the only way we can find salvation. There is only one foundation. “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). There is only one great salvation that has been given by God. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation” (Heb. 2:3)? Salvation is made possible by the blood of Jesus.

The Scriptures are the only way we can know about this one faith. John closed his gospel account by saying, “Truly, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). This faith depends upon salvation in the name of Jesus, and is found in the Word

of God. Anyone who teaches other than that is not holding to the one faith. We also need to understand that this faith—this Gospel system of salvation—is not a subjective “whatever-you-want-goes” Burger King “have-it-your-own-way” religion. This faith is not subjective, but is an objective moral standard for our lives. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 10:23, “Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” It is not subjective. We cannot find our own way to Heaven by whatever path **we** choose. The writer of Proverbs said, “There is a way that seems right to man, but the end thereof is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12). The Word of God gives this system of faith in the New Testament. It is our guide, and one day will be our judge (Jn. 12:48). Since that is the case, since the Bible is all we have, since it is our one hope of salvation, and since it is the only way we can know that we are right with God, we desperately need to stand up for that which is right.

Christians, in the day in which we live, are not commanded to go to battle physically against their opponents. We do not take up guns or swords. We do not beat up people because they are teaching error. Rather, we must wage a **spiritual** battle. How do we do that? How do we “contend earnestly for the faith” if we cannot physically attack others? We do it by defeating (with the truth) what they say. Our battle is not a physical battle. Paul said, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:4-5). We are fighting a spiritual battle in which we are casting down the arguments and false sayings of those who are opposing Christ. We are to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) and “wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18). We are to “take up the whole armor of God” so that we might win the battle against the devil and his cohorts (Eph. 6:13). Thus, our battle is a spiritual battle in which we hold up (shining forth!) the sword of the Spirit as we engage in spiritual battle against the enemies of God.

How do we do that? We do it by publicly opposing error. We today need to do more debating of the truth. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are told that we are to be ready to give a defense of the reason of the hope that is within us. We need to confront those who are in error. That is what real love is. Proverbs 27:5 says that “open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.” We must publicly defend the truth. We need to go to those personally who are teaching error in order to show them what the truth of God’s Word says. We must fight the good fight of faith. We must contend earnestly for the Gospel system.

But notice in the context of verse 4 of Jude what was going on. “Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” The problem was that there were some who were taking God’s grace and distorting it. They were turning it into lewdness—using it as a license to sin. Do people still do that today? Are there those who are turning the grace of God into a license to sin? Paul asked in Romans 6:1, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” This suggests that he was aware of the doctrine that some were promoting, which said, “the more you sin, the more you get God’s grace; so, let’s keep on sinning so we can keep on getting more grace; let’s have an overflow of wickedness so we can have an overflow of grace.” That is not the idea. God’s grace is not a license to sin. Titus 2:11-13 tells us that “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” How do people today distort God’s grace? Is there an emergency for us that should cause us to contend for the faith? Absolutely! There are those who say that we can never fall from grace. There is a distortion of God’s grace—a distortion that is parallel to the Book of Jude. It is a distortion that says, “No matter what you do, you cannot so sin as to fall from God’s grace and be

lost.” That is just not true, and is a horrible distortion of God’s truth. Think about Simon. Can a man fall from grace and be lost? Simon did—immediately after becoming a Christian. He had obeyed the Gospel (Acts 8:12). He was baptized along with other men and women (vs. 13). He then tried to buy the gift of God with money. Peter said to him, “You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Your money perish with you” (Acts 8:20-21). There is a clear passage on this topic. Simon was going to perish, be lost, and go to Hell. He had to pray to God and repent so that the evil thoughts of his heart might be forgiven. Galatians 5:4 says it in the exact language that false teachers use. Paul said, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; **you have fallen from grace.**” It is a distortion of grace to say that you cannot fall from it. It is a distortion of grace to say that no matter how badly we live, God still loves us, and we’ll be all right. Yes, God loves us. But He does not love sin. God gets angry at sin (Ps. 4:4; 7:4,11). God wants people to get their lives right. So let’s not distort the grace of God and say that no matter how we live or what we do, everything is going to be OK. In fact, the Old Testament examples that Jude gives us show us that people during the Old Testament times who had a distorted view of grace and how to live their lives were lost. Think about the people in Exodus. In Jude 5 we read of people who learned a great lesson as they followed God in the Exodus. They murmured and complained—and ended up wandering in the wilderness where their dead bodies fell as they perished. In 1 Corinthians 10:5-10 we learn that that were destroyed by the Destroyer. Here were people who were God’s children. Those people sinned, murmured, and complained (Ex. 15-17). God was angry with them. Therefore, they wandered through the wilderness for forty years, and their bodies and souls perished because of their sins. That is a great example.

What about the angels who sinned (Jude 6)? Jude mentions angels who sinned by not keeping their proper domain. They were cast down “in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” Second Peter 2:4 teaches this also. Angels are God’s special servants. They are with God, and work with Him to accomplish His purposes. We know that they have free will. Some of them sinned, and as a result they fell from their place of glory, and now are being reserved “in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” There is a clear example that a soul can so sin as to be eternally lost.

In Jude 7 we read of Sodom and Gomorrah, which suffered the fire and wrath of God because of their immorality. In Sodom, when angels arrived in the form of men, the people of that city wanted to have illicit relations with them. The angels had to use miraculous power to keep them from doing what they wanted to do. God then rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. Those people suffered physical and spiritual death because they had a distorted view of God and His grace.

Such is the case with modern-day dreamers—those who have fancy religious ideas (Jude 8-10) and who think that everything is flowery and will be OK if we just love God and our fellow man. This is the attitude which suggests that everything will be all right, regardless of what the Bible says. The dreamers during the time of the Old Testament and the time of Christ also were distorting God’s grace, and ultimately will be lost. Look at the nature of these people by examining Jude 11-13 how Jude described these people.

“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”

Jude described these people as those who “had gone in the way of Cain.” What did Cain do? God, according to 1 John 3, accepted Abel’s sacrifice because it was pleasing to God. That implies that God had a law and standard in place. Cain, however, acted disobediently with disregard to the authority of God. What does it mean to “go in the way of Cain”? It is the way of disobedience, and that rejects all authority by putting one’s self above all else.

Some, Jude said, “ran greedily in error.” Here were people who were not concerned about what was right or wrong. They were simply concerned with what they could get out of something. Balaam, at one time, made one of the greatest statements in the Bible. In Numbers 24:13 Balaam said, “I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do good or bad of my own will. What the Lord says, that I must speak?” Yet just a few chapters later Balaam sold out the people of God and died in battle against God’s people. Why? It was because he was “running greedily in error.”

There are so many who, on television or radio, make claims about the grace and love of God, and the only motive they have is to line their pockets. We want you to know today that we are concerned about your soul. We say these things, not because we are in it to get rich, but because we want you to go to Heaven and share in the great riches of God. We do not like want to be like those who “run greedily in error” as Balaam did.

Then Jude mentions the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16). Korah and his family thought that Aaron and Moses had taken too much authority upon themselves. Do you remember what God did on that occasion? God split open the earth and multiplied thousands of people were sucked into it. Why? It was because they had rejected, and rebelled against, the authority of God. They were like rocks in your feet. Perhaps this will be a vivid image for you. I can remember my grandmother buying a bag of beans. She would take those beans and put them in a strainer so she could run water through them. As she did that, she looked carefully through the beans. I was confused by that—until I noticed that the bags of beans contained rocks. She was going through the beans and getting out the rocks. I’m glad she did, because I would not want to bite down on a rock. Would you?! What are people like who are teaching error in a congregation? Can you imagine eating a big bite of beans—but chomping down on a rock? That is what those people were like. They were like rocks in a love feast.

They were like clouds without water (Jude 12). A cloud arises in the sky, and the farmer desperately needs rain from that cloud. The cloud is dark as it approaches. But before you know it, it’s gone. What good was that?! It made a great claim, but yielded no fruit—like “trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.” This reminds us of the tree that Jesus cursed. It had leaves, and appeared to be ready to produce fruit, yet it gave none. “Raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars....” That is what these people are like. They are lost. They are causing others to be lost. They make great claims, but their motives are not to help people get to Heaven.

We must make sure that we are wary of those who are really wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus said this in Matthew 7:15-17. He said that we need to be alert because there are people who are dressed in sheep’s clothing, yet inwardly are ravenous wolves. There are people like that today. They distort God’s grace. They may look good, dress nicely, and say religious things. But inside they are wolves in sheep’s clothing who are going to cause people to be lost. Certain people have crept in. In some places a preacher or youth minister may come in, yet it ends up that he was not interested in the truth. We have to test the spirits to see if they are of God. People in John’s time were known for their false teaching. Today, we must mark those who are in error. Romans 16:17 says that we must mark those

who cause division. Ephesians 5:11 teaches us, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." To turn the grace of God into a license to sin is truly a false teaching that must be brought out. And we must not let people who are in error teach these things.

What will happen to these false teachers? Their teachings are definite distortions of God's grace. They are something of which we need to beware. There is a real emergency in our time. But is God going to deal with these people? Look at God's view of these ungodly people, and notice how many times the word "ungodly" appears.

"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'" (Jude 14-15).

From a spiritual standpoint of God's mindset, these people were ungodly. They were anti-god. They were against godliness and God, and were opponents of the truth. The sad thing is that such people, unless they change their ways, are destined for eternal destruction. The Lord will come with ten thousand of His angels to bring His vengeance upon all of these people for all their ungodly ways. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we learn that the Lord will come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a serious thing to teach error and end up being lost. In Matthew 25:46 we are told that the righteous will go away eternal life, while the unrighteous will go away into eternal death. Revelation 20:14-15 says that those who are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire. The ungodly, immoral, and false prophets (Rev. 21:8) were cast into the lake of fire. As Jesus said in Mark 9:44, Hell is a place where the worm never dies and the fire is not quenched. If a person continues to teach error, he will be lost in an eternal Hell.

It is interesting to note that the word "ungodly" is used four times in Jude 15. This shows the severity of the people's sins. In 2 John 9 we read that "whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God." If we come across those who teach error, we cannot say simply, "Well, I don't really agree with that. But it's OK." We must realize that it is ungodly, and that it will cost people their souls.

As Jude wraps up his book, and brings to a close his message on "contending for the faith," he wants to offer some final exhortations to the faithful not to give up. These are exhortations to endurance for us today. He says first of all that we need to remember how the Lord said that such people would come, and that we should not be surprised because Jesus said it would be that way (vss. 17-19). Jesus said that wolves in sheep's clothing would come. If we are going to withstand the test of time amidst religious error, we must stay true to the Word. What is it that will hold us down? Hebrews 6:18 says that the Word of God, and God Himself, are our anchors. We need to trust God's Word, and stay true to it. We need to teach only what the Bible teaches.

We also must remember the nature of these false teachers. In verse 19 Jude says that they are sinful persons who are only in it for themselves. Those who teach error are not concerned about people going to Heaven. They are concerned about themselves. They are concerned about their lusts, their passions, and their greed. They are in it for Number One. And "Number One" is them! We must remember that it is our faith that will keep us true. In Jude 20, Jude tells us what we can do in the midst of these problems. Jude says, "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." What can we do in times like these? We need to be built up in the faith. In Acts 20:32 Paul said

to the Ephesian elders, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." We need to grow in our faith. Romans 10:17 teaches us that this comes by hearing the Word of God. It comes by study (2 Tim. 2:15). And it comes by trusting God.

We also need to remember the great love we are to have for those who are lost. In Jude 21 Jude says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Let's remember that God's love is real. Yes, there are people who distort it. There are people who distort the love and grace of God, and who make them into something they were never meant to be. But let's not forget what those things really mean. God so loved the world that He sent His own Son to die for us (Jn. 3:16). Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). God gave us His precious Son. We read in 2 Corinthians 8:9, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." In the midst of this emergency, let's remember the lost. Jude said, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire" (vs. 23). There are people who have gotten caught up in false doctrine, who are lost in sin, and who desperately need to be made aware of the truth. In times of religious error, we need to look for those who are honestly seeking the truth. Some we will save with love. These are those who need to hear the true message of God's love. Others need to be confronted for the error they are teaching or believing so that the fear of God will save them from the fire to come.

In all of this, we need to remember to praise God. Some of the greatest language of praise to God is found in Jude 24 and 25 where Jude says, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, o God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever." Considering all that is going on in this book, and the militant, aggressive approach that it takes, let's remember that our job is to defend the truth. But our main task is to praise God in everything we do. We praise God when we defend the truth, and when we live our lives like we ought to.

Have you properly obeyed the grace of God? There are those who are teaching things about grace that are not true. They say that it's a free gift, and that no matter how you live or what you do, everything will be OK. You do not have to be obedient to God. You do not have to do certain things to be in God's grace. Those things are just not true. Grace is found in Jesus (Jn. 1:17). Yes, we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8). But the grace of God teaches us to do what God wants us to do (Tit. 2:11-13). How does one receive the grace of God?

If grace is in Christ, then we need to ask, "How does the Bible teach that a person gets into Christ?" Galatians 3:27 says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." If grace is in Christ, and if the Bible says that we are baptized into Christ, then we cannot receive God's Christ without following God's plan of salvation. What is that plan? A person must hear God's Word (Rom. 10:17). A person must believe in Jesus (Jn. 8:24). A person must be willing to change his ways by repenting (Acts 3:19). A person must confess the beautiful name of Jesus before men (Mt. 10:32-33). And a person must be baptized in order to get into the body of Christ and receive God's grace. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Peter said, "Baptism does now also save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Then a person must walk in newness of life every day (Rom. 6:4). We cannot use God's grace as a license to do whatever we want to do. I ask you today: Are you in the grace of God? May each of us contend earnestly for the faith.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## **STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1, 2, & 3 JOHN AND JUDE LESSON 4 (JUDE)**

1. In Jude 3 we find the thematic idea behind the entire book. What is that idea?
2. According to Ephesians 4:5, how many “faiths” are found in the Gospel system?
3. According to Acts 4:10-12, upon whom is the Gospel system of faith based?
4. According to 1 Corinthians 3:11, who or what forms the foundation of the Gospel system of faith?
5. What, according to John 20:30-31, are two purposes of the teaching found within books such as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?
6. What important message for humankind is found in Jeremiah 10:23?
7. What important message for humankind is found in Proverbs 14:12?
8. What, according to John 12:48, will serve as our judge on the Day of Judgment?
9. What does Peter 3:15 admonish every Christian to do?
10. According to Jude 4, what had certain Christians done that merited a rebuke from Jude?
11. What question concerning grace did the apostle Paul ask in Romans 6:1?
12. In Romans 6:2, how did Paul answer the question he had asked in the previous verse?
13. According to Galatians 5:4, what had happened to some Christians?
14. In Jude 5,6, and 7, Jude gives three examples of people in the past who chose not to listen to God, and who suffered terribly because of it. Name those three examples.
15. In Jude 8, Jude spoke of people who had rejected something. What had they rejected?
16. In Jude 11, Jude spoke of those who had “gone in the way of Cain”? What does that phrase mean?
17. In Jude 11, Jude spoke of some who had “run greedily in the error of Balaam.” What does that phrase mean?
18. In Jude 14-15, Jude used one very forceful word four times to describe certain people. What is that word?
19. What type of people did Jude condemn in Jude 19?
20. In Jude 20, what did Jude urge Christians to do?
21. In Jude 21, what did Jude urge Christians to do?