

Jude 1:1–25

Contending for the Faith in an Age of Apostasy

Introduction: A Timely Letter for a Troubled Age

Though Jude is only twenty-five verses long, this short letter carries a sobering and urgent message for the church (i.e., you and me). Jude writes not to unbelievers, but to believers—men and women who have already received the gospel and now must guard it.

Jude identifies himself in verse one:

“Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” (Jude 1:1, NKJV)

The word *servant* is the Greek word *doulos*, meaning a bondsman—one who belongs entirely to another. Jude does not introduce himself by appealing to family privilege, even though he was the half-brother of Jesus. Instead, he identifies himself humbly as a servant of Christ. That alone tells us much about genuine spiritual maturity.

James, his brother, was a recognized leader of the church in Jerusalem, as seen in Acts chapter fifteen. Both James and Jude did not believe in Jesus during His earthly ministry. Scripture tells us plainly:

“For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” (John 7:5, NKJV)

It was the resurrection that changed everything. The risen Christ transformed skeptics into servants. That is still what the resurrection does today.

Called, Loved, and Kept

Jude writes to those who are:

“Sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” (Jude 1:1, NKJV)

To be sanctified means to be set apart for God’s exclusive use. Just as the vessels in the tabernacle were set apart for worship, so our lives now belong to Him. We are not our own.

And we are *preserved*—kept—by Jesus Christ. Our security rests not in our consistency, but in His faithfulness. Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He keeps those whom He saves.

Jude’s greeting is unusual:

“Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.” (Jude 1:2, NKJV)

In a letter about apostasy, mercy comes first. We desperately need God’s mercy in a fallen world, peace in a troubled heart, and love in a hostile culture.

The Urgent Call: Contend for the Faith

Jude explains that he originally intended to write a letter of encouragement about salvation, but the Holy Spirit redirected him:

“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.” (Jude 1:3, NKJV)

The phrase *once for all delivered* means the faith is complete. It does not evolve. It does not need updating. It does not require modern correction. The gospel entrusted to the church is final and sufficient.

To contend for the faith does not mean to be argumentative or combative in the flesh. It means to stand firmly, lovingly, and courageously for truth in a time of compromise.

The Danger Within

Why is this necessary?

“For certain men have crept in unnoticed... ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:4, NKJV)

These are not outsiders attacking the church from without. They are infiltrators corrupting the church from within. They abuse grace as permission for sin and deny Christ not always by words, but by the way they live and teach.

Grace does not excuse sin; it transforms sinners. Scripture says:

“For 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.” (Titus 2:11–12, NKJV)

Three Warnings from History

Jude reminds us of three sobering examples:

1. Israel in the wilderness — delivered from Egypt, yet destroyed through unbelief (Jude 1:5). They were redeemed but refused to trust God fully.
2. Fallen angels — beings who abandoned God’s order and are now reserved for judgment (Jude 1:6).
3. Sodom and Gomorrah — societies consumed by moral corruption and destroyed by divine judgment (Jude 1:7).

Unbelief, rebellion, and moral compromise always carry consequences.

The Character of Apostasy

Jude describes false teachers as dreamers who defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak arrogantly about things they do not understand. Even Michael the archangel did not presume to rebuke Satan directly but said:

“The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 1:9, NKJV)

False teachers, by contrast, speak with pride and presumption.

They follow the way of Cain (hatred), Balaam (greed), and Korah (rebellion against God’s authority). They promise much but produce nothing—clouds without water, fruitless trees, wandering stars destined for darkness.

The Certainty of Judgment

Jude reminds us that judgment is coming:

“Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all.” (Jude 1:14–15, NKJV)

Jesus came first to save. He will come again to judge. The resurrection guarantees both.

Our Responsibility as Believers

In contrast to apostates, believers are called to action:

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up 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.” (Jude 1:20–21, NKJV)

This does not mean earning God’s love. It means living in the place where His love can freely bless and transform us. Pride, bitterness, greed, and rebellion move us out of that place.

We are also called to be wise in outreach:

“On some have compassion... others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” (Jude 1:22–23, NKJV)

People are different. We must depend on the Holy Spirit, not formulas when we share the gospel.

Assurance

Jude closes with one of the most beautiful assurances in Scripture:

“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...” (Jude 1:24–25, NKJV)

Our hope rests in Him. Jesus bore every sin in His body on the cross. His resurrection declares victory. He will present us faultless—not because of our perfection, but because of His grace.

A Challenge for Believers

Believer, are you contending for the faith—not angrily, but faithfully? Are you growing in truth, walking in love, and living with eternity in view? Much of what we chase in this world will burn. What remains is what we do for Christ.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have never placed your trust in Jesus Christ, hear this clearly:
He loves you. He shed His blood on the cross for your sins. He rose from the dead, proving He is God, Savior, and Lord. Forgiveness is not earned—it is received.

Today, you can turn to Him, confess your need, and receive eternal life.

“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13, NKJV)

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.
Amen.