

“Take a Stand” – Jude 3-4

Last week we looked at “Being on Guard.” We saw that even as people who confess to believe in Christ Jesus, that an active faith, one that takes action based on one’s belief, is the foundation for God’s protection and provision of eternal life. As Jude started out his letter we found that He felt it necessary to first deal with our own salvation before we can even begin to be on guard against those who will come in and teach false doctrine and lead many astray.

This week we want to continue to look at Jude’s words of warning to the church and make note of his heart and convictions in regards to this topic.

In a book entitled, “The Bridger Generation”, written by Thom Rainer, the dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and researcher for the Billy Graham Crusades, he presents the following statistics.

In the Bridger generation, those born between 1977-1994, a poll was taken from those claiming to be practicing Christians. What was found was:

1. Less than one-half (42 percent) believe that their faith makes a difference in their lives.
2. Only 40 percent of the bridger’s believe that God is all-knowing and all-powerful.
3. Over one-half (55 percent) believe that when people of different faiths pray to their gods, they are really praying to the same God.
4. Only one-third of the older bridger’s believe that when they die they will go to heaven because they have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and have repented of their sins.

These statistics may be due to false teachings within the church or even the lack of biblical teaching. In our society today we find many faiths and within those faiths though we find 4 main trends of religion.

1. The first is the concept of **Universalism**. It is the belief that no human being will ultimately be lost. That sooner or later, God will eventually save every person due to his loving nature. How could a loving God allow anyone to go to hell? Or how could a loving God exclude anyone from heaven? A man by the name of Wilfred Cantrell Smith writes, “Jesus is the only way to be narrow minded and prejudiced against other religions. How dare one group claim that their way is the only way. Exclusivism (the belief that Christ is the only way of salvation) strikes more and more Christians as immoral.”
2. The second concept is that of **Pluralism**. This concept holds that humans may be saved or go to heaven through numerous religious traditions and saviors. John Hicks, a famous pluralists, has stated, “There is not merely one way but a plurality of ways of salvation or liberation . . . taking place in different ways within the context of all

the great religious traditions.” Unfortunately, pluralism has great difficulty in clearly-defining what separates “good” religion from the “bad” religions. Obviously, within our world we are surrounded by both. The narrow way of Christ is offensive to pluralists. John Hicks has also said, “If Jesus was literally God incarnate, and if it is by his death alone that men can be saved, and by their response to him that they can appropriate that salvation, then the only doorway to eternal life is the Christian faith. It would follow from this that the large majority of the human race so far have not been saved.” To the pluralist this is incomprehensible.

3. The third concept is that of **Inclusivism**. The Inclusivists believe salvation does come from Jesus Christ yet also agrees with the pluralists that God’s salvation is not restricted to the relatively few people who respond to the Gospel and believe in Jesus Christ. This concept is tempting to the Christians and churches that do not want to appear narrow-minded, yet desire to affirm the work of Christ. Clark Pinnock one of the most dominant voices of inclusivism made the following observation. “Some intend the same reality Christians intend when they believe in God as personal, good, knowing, kind, and strong. If people in Ghana speak of the transcendent God as the shining one, as unchangeable as a rock, as all-wise and all-loving, how can any conclude otherwise that they intend to acknowledge the true God as Christians do?”
4. The fourth and final concept is that of **Exclusivism**. Exclusivism can be defined as being explicit faith in regards to one God and one way to God. Christianity falls into the is concept. We believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and explicit faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation. Christian exclusivism believes that the Christian faith is the only true religion and that any religious beliefs that are incompatible with Christian beliefs are false. Yet to claim that our Savior, Jesus Christ is the only Savior is a sign of intolerance. In today’s society the majority see open-ended religious tolerance as the fad while staunch Christian exclusivity is out of style.

We live in a day where false teaching and false teachers are spreading their heresy and some of that heresy is infecting the church. The church wants to be known as relevant and open yet some become irreverent and compromise the authority of God’s word and His truth. Jude’s book is for us today. We need to pay attention to his words.

Jude 3-4:

Dear loved friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the truth of the Good News. God gave this unchanging truth once for all time to his holy people. I say this because some godless people have wormed their way in among you, saying that God’s forgiveness allows us to live immoral lives. The fate of such people was determined long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude begins by telling us that he planned to write about salvation yet felt the need to change his topic because godless people had wormed their way into (crept in unnoticed) the church. In this time of history the churches had the words of Jesus, Paul and Peter, voicing their concern that this would happen. How much easier it for this same trap to happen today. So Jude continues and states that now we must defend the Good News, a challenge that we must take ourselves.

A. Why do we need to defend the Good News?

1. Some will deny the all-sufficiency of Scripture.

For some reason human nature has the idea that the Scriptures are not enough for life challenges and growth. That at times new truths need to be added. Note, however, the words in verse 3, "God gave his unchanging truth once for all time to his holy people." This tells us that we have ALL of God's truth within scripture. The idea that additional revelations need to be added goes strictly against the truth of God's word.

Paul, when talking to the Ephesian elders stated in **Acts 20:27**

"For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God."

Peter wrote in **II Peter 1:3** that God has given us "everything we need for life and godliness." If this is true then what else is there?

The Scriptures of God have all that we need in order grow and develop. **II Timothy 3:16-17** states:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

When the world tells us that Scripture is incomplete that it is irrelevant, or that it is still in progress and needs additional revelation, we need to stand on the truth that we have all we need from God's inspired word. We need to respond like vs. 3 and defend the truth.

2. Some will pervert the doctrine of grace and forgiveness.

Jude tells us in verse 4 that people have taken God's grace and forgiveness as a license to sin. The Apostle Paul dealt with a similar circumstance in **Romans 6:1-4**:

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we

died with him? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

People actually thought that the more they sinned the more opportunity they gave God to show His grace and forgiveness. People do nothing more than try to justify their lifestyle which is contrary to God's Word. They think that by justification that they will find forgiveness yet in reality they live in denial. But listen to Paul's words in **Titus 2:11-12**:

For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God.

We are not to allow the world to dictate our behavior. We are not free to live how we want. We are told to turn away from worldly behavior and live in self-control, in righteousness, committed to God.

3. Some will deny God's authority

Jude tells us in **verse 4** that people will turn against God. They will rebel and deny His authority in their lives. The word "Lord" (Kurios) here has the idea of one who has supreme authority over all things. People will deny the authority of God to whom all things belong.

Today, we find a society where the authority of God's word is in question. And because it is in question people set up their own standards of authority. They pick and choose people with whom they agree or support their own human intellect.

But Jude tells us to defend the truth of the Good News. In order to do so we must recognize the authority of Jesus Christ. **Matthew 28:18**:

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth."

Ephesians 1:21-22

Now Jesus Christ is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church.

Through Christ's work on the cross he has proven his authority and has now become the mediator between mankind and God. To separate Christ from God would eliminate our connection and forgiveness and will put us as an enemy of God. It is only because of the

forgiveness through Christ that we are able to enter into the presence of God. We are to defend the truth of Good News, but how are we to do it?

B. How do we defend the Good News?

The Greek translation of defend is translated as “contend earnestly” and is related to the English word “agony.” To contend for the Good News means to have a continuous struggle, debate with a sense of conviction or agony. Jude believed that it wasn’t just enough to voice our disagreement with simple words, but to also show a conviction in our disagreements. The fact that Jude would describe our defense of God’s Word as he did tells us that it was a serious matter. It almost has the sense that we are at war against the distortion of truth.

The Apostle Paul talked about a war in **II Corinthians 10:3-6**

We are human, but we don't wage war with human plans and methods. We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds. With these weapons we break down every proud argument that keeps people from knowing God. With these weapons we conquer their rebellious ideas, and we teach them to obey Christ. And we will punish those who remained disobedient after the rest of you become loyal and obedient.

Ephesians 6:10-13:

A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

As we can see, false teaching is nothing but a strategy of evil forces. II Corinthians tells us that they are arguments that keep people from knowing God. It is the ultimate strategy of Satan to see mankind destroyed. But we can combat the enemy with God’s armor.

Ephesians 6:13-18

Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil. So that after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at ALL times and on every occasion in the power of

the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.

Notice that a lot of God's armor are for our own defense. The elements of truth, righteousness, the Good News, and salvation are important for us to utilize in our own lives let alone us contending for those things in someone else's life. We have to be prepared so that when we stand we can stand on the power and authority of God. **Matthew 7:3-5** says,

And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, 'Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

We need to make sure that we are prepared to help others. That preparation involves the honest evaluation of our own lives and the acknowledgement of our need to change. We can't help others if we ourselves are struggling and can't see clearly ourselves.

We as a church must take a stand but we need to make sure that we have the strength to do so. We must be prepared with God's armor and then confront the distortion of truth with conviction and agonizing urgency. Not that we are going to loose control and go into a rage or an outburst of wrath. But that we sense the seriousness and the importance of people finding the truth. **Galatians 5:19-21** tells us that it is the sinful nature that produces evil behavior, including that of outbursts of anger. The same is said in **I Corinthians 3:1-3**.

But we are to contend for the faith, defend it, value it, place priority on it. And we are to do so with conviction and a sense of seriousness. Yet, we must be able to separate the sin of distorted truth from the sinner. We are to defend the faith so that people will find true salvation.

In order to take a stand one must utilize the power of God and His armor. In order to take a stand one must allow the truth to become their priority and thus fuel a conviction that takes it seriously. And in order to take a stand we must lovingly tell others about the Good News that can bring them eternal life and the dangers of Satan's plan for their life.