

Jude 3-4
October 17, 2021

Norman Mailer wrote a book entitled, "The Fight." In it, he chronicled the epic boxing match between Mohammed Ali and George Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire. This is the fight known to sports history as the "Rumble in the Jungle."

Mailer describes the first few moments of the fight.

"The bell! Through a long unheard sigh of collective release, Ali charged across the ring. He looked as big and determined as Foreman, so he held himself, as if he possessed the true threat. They collided without meeting, their bodies still five feet apart. Each veered backward like similar magnetic poles repelling one another forcibly. Then Ali came forward again, Foreman came forward, they circled, they feinted, they moved in an electric ring, and Ali threw the first punch, a tentative left. It came up short. Then he drove a lightning-strong right straight as a pole into the stunned center of Foreman's head, the unmistakable thwomp of a high-powered punch. A cry went up. Whatever else happened, Foreman had been hit. No opponent had cracked George this hard in years and no sparring partner had dared to... They circled again. They feinted. They started in on one another and drew back. It was as if each held a gun.

If one fired and missed, the other was certain to hit. If you threw a punch, and your opponent was ready, your own head would take his punch. What a shock. It is like seizing a high-voltage line. Suddenly you are on the floor.”

Ali would go on to suddenly put Foreman on said floor in the 8th round.

Boxers bob and weave and jab and dance and block and parry and punch, punch, punch, punch. We all understand that a boxing match is a fight.

But do you understand that the Christian life is also a fight?

Might sound hyperbolic, but it is not.

Jude is going to call us to fight.

Boxers must fight to win.

Jude is telling us today that Christians fight to survive.

This may be a shock to hear this kind of language but Jude does not want any of us to end up on the floor.

You must fight.

Never a moment to let down your guard.

Never an instant without being opposed.
Never a second your opponent is not stalking you.
Never a moment to roll back on your heels.
Never a moment to feel sorry for yourself.

You must fight.

To stay standing you must fight.
To make it until the end you must fight.
To follow Jesus faithfully you must fight.
To give your life meaning you must fight.
To stand firm as a Christian you must fight.

You must fight.

The fight Jude is calling us to is NOT:

For our understanding
For our tranquility
For our serenity
For our composure
For our dreams to come true

But for THE FAITH.

Jude calls us this morning to fight for “the faith.”

Today we will listen to Jude describe to us the fight we all must fight that is more treacherous than any pugilistic boxing match. The fight for faith.

His purpose this morning can be summarized in four simple words—

PROP: Fight for the Faith.

While we are going to focus on verses 3-4, I'll read starting at the beginning to remind us a bit of the context.

[1] Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

[2] May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

[3] Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. [4] For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Jude 1–4

PRAY

Four things about the Fight.

1. *The Fight is for “the Faith”*

This comes directly from verse 3—

[3] Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Notice that Jude says we must contend for “the faith.” That word, “the” is a small word but not one to miss if you want to understand the nature of our fight.

He is not saying:

Strengthen your faith

Examine your faith

Add to your faith

But rather contend (fight) for ‘the faith.’ He is saying that we each need to fight to hold onto the faith or the content of our common salvation in Jesus Christ. False teachers in their midst had distorted the gospel by perverting grace and Jude tells them to fight to retain the faith.

“The faith” is not of their own making but has been “once and for all delivered to the saints.” This faith is the message about Jesus that has been handed down by eyewitnesses. They saw and recorded his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. They wrote recorded what his life and death and resurrection meant for sinners like you and me.

This body of truth came to Jude’s audience just as it has come to us. This faith we are to fight for has been handed down and we must fight to keep it the same.

Any who alter the Christian faith corrupt the Christian faith.

To be able to fight for the faith you have to be familiar with the faith that has been handed down once and for all. The content of our faith centers on Jesus Christ of Nazareth and what he did. There are many ways that the church has sought to equip the saints to fight for the faith—the oldest form outside the Bible is in the form of creeds.

Christian creeds summarize biblical teaching. The Nicæan Creed one of the most ancient speaks directly of the faith that has been handed down once and for all—

*We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.*

*Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.*

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.*

This is a summary of who Jesus is and what he did.

You must also believe in this faith handed down.

That you were a sinner deserving of eternal death but by trusting in Jesus you receive eternal life. You must not merely believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as mere events, but you must believe these events to be both necessary and sufficient for your forgiveness and salvation.

Or more simply—you must believe:

Jesus died for your sins.

Jesus rose for your justification.

Jesus lives so you live forever.

Jesus calls you to live a life of obedience to him.

That is the faith handed down once and for all.

This is the faith we fight for.

Any alteration of this faith is a corruption of this faith.

So we fight. We fight together to hold onto the truth of who Jesus is and what he has done. This is the fight for “the faith.”

Also,

2. The Fight is for you to Fight

There is no one who is commissioned to fight for you. No substitutes are allowed. We each must fight for the faith in our own lives.

Pastoral ministry is meant to equip you to know, understand, and fight for the faith but no leader can do your fighting for you. This is up to you. Everyone who follows Jesus must embrace the fight for the faith.

Jude's audience faced a specific sort of attack upon the faith—look at verse 4,

[4] For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

What are they doing? Corrupting the faith by perverting the grace of God into “sensuality.”

What is he saying?

The faith was being corrupted by license.

There are two great dangers we must fight to preserve the faith. One is legalism which seeks to add something to the message of Jesus Christ. A message of Trust Jesus AND

Obey the law
Don't eat meat
Get Circumcised
Homeschool

That is legalism.

License says something different—it says—you don't have to worry so much about sin. Most of the time a perversion of grace is a presumption upon grace.

What does this look like?

Excusing sin.
Minimizing sin.
Downplaying sin.
Redefining sin.
Marginalizing obedience.

Make no mistake, no one is saved by dint of their sparkling obedience. All have fallen short of the glory of God...but also those who are saved must also live a life of obedience.

The seeds of this perversion are in all of our hearts. How can you tell?

Any sin that you are aware of, but decide to come to terms with instead of terminate is a perversion of grace.

Do you see how?

It is giving into a lifestyle of sin and presuming that sin is not that big of a deal. OR a common trick is calling a life of obedience legalistic.

When grace becomes an excuse for sin instead of our remedy for sin, we are in serious trouble. Part of the fight for faith is a fight against sin. I'm talking about patterns of sin in our lives. Things that we are aware of.

You can't repent of something you know nothing about.

When you pervert grace you lose the faith handed down once and for all.

Often very subtle. These false teachers were not saying anything wrong about Jesus. They weren't saying he was born on Mars or only appeared to die or didn't really rise from the dead. They were saying something far more insidious.

Something like this—

Why worry so much about sin?

Obedience is hard, give yourself a break.

Jesus wants you to be happy.

Jesus wants you to have it easy.

Grace means all will be okay.
Love wins.

OR

If you are saved by grace through faith, calm down. Your sexual mores are legalistic, old fashioned, out of date. Jesus offers grace—live and do what you want and you will be okay.

This, friends is presuming on grace.

Often shows up in sexual ethics. No one is going to say it is okay to commit adultery but is it okay to leave your spouse if they don't make you happy or fulfill your dreams.

OR

If Jesus were alive today he would approve of the homosexual lifestyle—if not and we are wrong—there is grace for that.

OR

You need to sleep with your future spouse to make sure that you are sexually compatible before you are married.

OR

A thousand other things.

License is often a danger for those who have grown up in a legalistic background. They can run to the other extreme and presume upon grace.

Grace never leads us away from obedience.

Grace never excuses patterns of sin.

Grace is not permissive.

Grace is not negligent.

Grace is not lazy.

It is by grace you are saved and by grace you can fight.

I want you to notice Jude's assessment of the behavior—

[4] For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Ungodly.

And the life they live repudiates Jesus as Master and Lord.

We must fight for the faith—straining to live a life pleasing to him. Knowing that all of us will struggle against sin but we must continue the struggle against sin in order to stand firm in these evil days.

What have we seen?

The fight is for “the faith.”

The fight is for you to fight.

3. The Fight is Always Internal

Sometimes people can take verse 3 out of context and teach that the contending we do for the faith is out there in the community, in our culture. But that is not the idea here. We should take the faith out to your community but not in a contentious way.

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” 1 Peter 3:15–16

The most strenuous and dangerous fighting is always internal.

In you and me—but we have covered that in our previous point.

But also, in the church.

The greatest threat to the church is always within the church. New and innovative teaching that undermines “the faith.” This is the

same message Paul left with his dear friend in Ephesus the last time he saw them,

[28] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. [29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. [31] Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. [32] And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:28–32

Paul doesn't tell them to watch out for the wicked Romans. He tells them to watch out for themselves.

Just getting real practical here and probably stepping on a toe or two, if you are more concerned about what the Biden Administration may do to stem religious freedom than you are of the false gospels you and I are apt to believe you fear is misplaced.

Why?

Let's say our right to worship is abridged.

Are we going to stop being a church? No. Am I going to get up and say, “Hey Washington said that we cannot say that Jesus is the only way.” OR “What the Bible teaches about the homosexual lifestyle is hate speech.”

So, I guess we are going to fold it up. See you guys later.

That is not going to happen.

A greater threat is that we lose our grip on “the faith” that has been handed down once and for all. That is much more dangerous. No one is going to say we cannot serve Jesus and make it work. The greater danger is that we lose our edge for Jesus and decide that we can compromise on sins big and small and end up losing the faith handed down once and for all.

This is why we must fight for the faith.

In this fight we need to be most suspicious of our ourselves. Jude is not commissioning us to fight against each other. But rather to fight to keep and hold the faith that you have today. That I have today.

This is not just a matter of believing the faith. It is insisting that the faith handed down once and for all impacts all the decisions we make in our lives. So when someone comes along—even if they are in the church (here or otherwise) we fight to believe the faith handed down once and for all though teachers tout a different faith.

We must fight for the faith.

The fight is for “the faith.”

The fight is for you to fight.

The Fight is Always Internal.

4. No one Fights Alone

Not only do we have each other so that we might fight together to keep “the faith.” We also have a stronger and more potent ally in this battle for our lives.

Frank talked about it last week—if you haven’t yet you should listen to his excellent message—but he mentioned that he pointed out three very important words in verse 1—

Called

Beloved

Kept

Each one of those words shouts of God’s might. It roars of his unrestrained supremacy. It bellows the comfort—if we will listen.

What do we hear when we listen?

Notice the words—these words are

Called
Beloved
Kept

The focus is on what he has done for us.

Before we called out to him—he called to us.

Before we loved him—he loved us.

Before we tried to keep ourselves—he promises to keep us.

You are called—

God sought you before you sought God. He, by his grace called to you before you were thinking of him. He reached out to you when you had no thought of him. Not only did he call you in the past—he will continue to call to himself now.

You are beloved—

God loves you. There is not a better message than that. He loves you not because you have earned his love but because he is a God who showers steadfast love upon all his people. God's love cannot falter or fade.

You will be kept—

It is by his power working in us that we will be kept until the end. You might wonder—what about all this fighting for the faith talk?

All true. We must fight. We must not falter. We can't rock back on our heels...but we do not fight alone. We fight with a strength lent to us by God. The Christian life cannot be passive—it is never passive. The idea of letting go and letting God is in the main unhelpful.

How does God keep us?

One of the means by which he keeps us is by spurring us on to keep fighting for the faith that was handed down once and for all. Another is by reminding us that we do not fight alone.

We fight with the strength of another—who?

Vs. 2, the “only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

How did he become Master and Lord of all things?

By strength through weakness. Jesus appeared to be defeated by death but instead defeated death. In so doing, he rose to become Master and Lord of all things. And all people.

This Master and Lord—bids us FIGHT.

But we do not just FIGHT by his side.

We do not just FIGHT by his command.

We do not just FIGHT at his bidding.

We fight with the strength he provides. That is the only reason that all our fighting can do any good.

Just as Jude does not want any of us to experience the shock of a punch in the face and end up on the floor—he also wants us to know that our Master and Lord will—

pick us up WHEN we fall.

Never a moment to let down your guard—but when we do, he will hold up our hands.

Never an instant without being opposed—Never a moment of abandonment by your Master.

Never a second your opponent is not stalking you—Never a moment the Lord is not praying for you.

Never a moment to roll back on your heels—never a moment he does not strengthen.

Never a moment to feel sorry for yourself—never a moment you cannot cry for help.

You must fight.

I must fight.

We all must fight.

PRAY

