

Me Fight?

Jim Elliff

"Fight earnestly for the faith given to the holy ones once for all" (Jude 3, MLV)

Do you like to fight? I hope not. God's word speaks of our attitude toward others as peaceful and our demeanor as loving. Jesus said that in conflict we should turn the other cheek. However, here, the half brother of Jesus himself instructs his readers to fight earnestly. Some translations read, "contend earnestly," but that seems just as opposite to the nature of a believer as fighting.



Fight for what?

Jude says that we are to fight in order to preserve "the faith" that was once-for-all delivered to the saints. "The faith" isn't "believing," as in the trust we have when we live our lives as Christians, but it is the New Testament way of saying, "the things believed." It is sometimes called "the Apostolic doctrine," or that which the original Apostles formulated under Christ's oversight for Christians in the churches that were springing up all over the world. It's what you find written in the New Testament letters. At the heart of it all is the gospel itself.

Why is fighting important?

Jude makes this so clear, we could not possibly miss it. We fight because "some men sneaked in, the ungodly . . . transforming the grace of our God into carnal indulgences and denying our only Master, God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the influence of such people that we war against when we contend for the truth.

In other words: there are some people who are in our churches that entered as perfectly normal believers, it appeared, but they were actually ungodly people who turn the grace we have in Christ to licentiousness or freedom to sin. They excuse their sins and the sins of others. In doing this, their actions actually deny the Master, who is the Father, and the Lord, who is Jesus Christ. They may not say that they deny the Master, but it is in fact what rejecting his Lordship means. They take liberty to mean license. They live in such a way and teach in such a way that fails to uphold the proper connection between grace and obedience.

Jude attributes 13 descriptions and 17 actions to these people, just to make sure we know who they are. In these statements, we find sexual license and love of money especially prominent, along with many other sins. Such people present themselves

like fine Christians externally, but they teach something different with their lives and/or with their words.

Are such enemies with us?

Jude says that such people were in the churches he wrote to. "They are hidden reefs in your love feasts, sumptuously feasting alongside you without fear," he stated. Since the churches met weekly in the evening for their agape feast, we can assume that they were regularly involved in the life of the church. "These are the ones who cause splits, who are sensual, not having the Spirit," Jude went on to say. Are such people in your church?

What does fighting look like?

Jude doesn't mention church discipline in this letter. He doesn't even tell us to teach the truth. Yet perhaps he does mean for us to use whatever in our arsenal to combat errant teaching and ungodly actions in the church when he says to "fight." We are to constantly teach and lead people to obey the truth and to do it earnestly and tirelessly.

Jude ends with this battleground speech:

1. *Remember that the Apostles told us there would be mockers* who walked according to their lusts among us.
2. Building yourself up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, *keep yourselves in God's love*, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ into eternal life.
3. *Have mercy on some*, making a distinction between them and the others who lead them or those who will not repent.
4. *Save others with fear*, taking them out of the fire, hating even the tunic stained by the flesh.

Outside of the way you act toward yourself, rescuing people seems to be a major part of the fighting plan for believers. You are also the medics who pull some away who have fallen in battle as victims of wrong teaching and the misleading lifestyles of some who profess to know Christ.

The battle goes on right now. Are you engaged?