"A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL"

"Creepers, Sneakers, Wormers" Scripture Reading – II Peter, 1:16 – 2:3

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased". We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

'Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.'

Jude, 1:3-4, NIV

This series, 'A HANDBOOK FOR SURVIVAL', is based on THE LETTER OF JUDE.

To protect from harm, to guard from attack, to repulse enemies – for centuries rugged defenders have built walls, launched missiles, and waged wars, expending materiel and human resources in the battle to save nations and cities. With total commitment and courageous abandon, individuals have fought for their families. It is a rule of life that we fight for survival, defending with all our strength what is most precious to us, from every real or imagined attack.

There are many people who live in opposition to God and his followers.

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They twist God's truth, seeking to deceive and destroy the unwary, but God's truth must go forth, carried and defended by those who have committed their lives to God's Son. It is an important task, an awesome responsibility, and a profound privilege to have this commission.

This was Jude's message to Christians everywhere.

Opposition would come and godless teachers would arise, but Christians should 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' by rejecting all falsehood and immorality, remembering God's mighty acts of rescue and punishment, and the warnings of the apostles. His readers are encouraged to build up their own faith through prayer, keeping close to Christ, helping others, and hating sin. Finally, Jude concludes with a glorious benediction of praise to God.

There are many false teachers waiting to destroy your Christ-centred life, the credibility of God's Word, and the unity of the body of Christ. THE LETTER OF JUDE calls Christians to stand firm in their faith and defend God's truth at all costs, because nothing else is more valuable...

"THE BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE"

When I was young, Saturday morning television featured 'TARZAN'.

Johnny Weissmuller, who was once an Olympic swimmer, probably had the best Tarzan yell of them all. That said, his swimming ability often came to the fore because Tarzan would frequently swim in a river or a lake. On the bank there would usually be a crocodile who would be as stationery as a log. Then he would open his eyes, blink a few times, and then slide off the bank and into the water. The crocodile would hardly make a ripple, but just very silently it would slip into the water after the hero.

Of course, no matter how fast the crocodile swam, Tarzan would swim faster.

Although you and I could probably outrun a crocodile on land, we would have no chance in the water. After all, they are designed for speed and can achieve speeds well in excess of 15 km/h. In fact, they can go even faster in short bursts. Nonetheless, Tarzan always escaped.

In his letter, Jude focuses on the dangers of 'APOSTASY'.

'APOSTASY' occurs when people turn away from God's truth and embrace false teachings. Jude goes on to warn us about dangerous crocodiles (alright, he does not use the phrase – but he does warn against those who 'HAVE SECRETLY SLIPPED IN AMONG YOU'). In Greek, this is the word 'PAREISDUEIN', and it speaks about someone who could, for example, slip into the water without making a ripple, without us noticing it. These men are deadly, and they are dangerous – spiritual crocodiles, if you like, who are out to do harm and destroy you!

Last time, we noted that THE LETTER OF JUDE is 'A CALL TO ARMS!'.

In the light of opposition and danger, we are urged 'TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH THAT WAS ONCE FOR ALL ENTRUSTED TO THE SAINTS'. Jude had wanted to write about salvation. He was going to write about the life, death, and burial of Jesus Christ. He was going to tell how Jesus was raised from the dead. He was going b talk about how we could obtain salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He was going to write about how we could be filled with the Holy Spirit. He was going to write about living the holy life and the hope of heaven. But, the Holy Spirit would not let him, so Jude wrote that we need 'TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH'.

The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground.

The truth is, I would much rather encourage the saints than declare war on the apostates, but when the enemy is in the field, the watchmen dare not go to sleep.

THE LETTER OF JUDE is a call to arms to warn against a very real threat to the Christian Faith...

1. THE DANGER OF APOSTATES

'For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.'

Jude. 1:4a. NIV

The peril facing the Christian Church came from within the Church.

Sometimes Satan's undercover agents are brought in secretly by those already on the inside, but these men came in on their own, under their own steam.

The **CEV** uses the phrase: 'SOME GODLESS PEOPLE HAVE SNEAKED IN AMONG US'.

The **KJV** uses the phrase: 'FOR THERE ARE CERTAIN MEN CREPT IN UNAWARES'.

The **NKJV** uses the phrase: 'CERTAIN MEN HAVE CREPT IN UNNOTICED'.

The **NLT** uses the phrase: 'GODLESS PEOPLE HAVE WORMED THEIR WAY IN AMONG YOU'.

'PAREISDUEIN' refers to those people who come in uninvited.

It is the idea of slipping in through the side door. When you have a party, all your invited guests come in through the front door, but this is when someone who is uninvited slips in through the side door and mingles with the other guests, pretending he has been invited.

'PAREISDUEIN' refers to a clever lawyer who slips an idea into your mind.

It is the slipping of an idea into a jurors mind that will have a desired effect later. Using seductive words and arguments, the clever lawyer will win the case because something he said, that seemed so innocent at the time, will resonate in your mind. The seed that was sowed will be watered and with careful attention grow.

'PAREISDUEIN' refers to one who slips into a country from which he has been expelled.

It could be used, for example, of a failed asylum seeker who leaves the country vowing not to return, and then enters into the country in a casual manner and then just slips underground – off the map, or under the radar of the authorities.

'PAREISDUEIN' indicates a stealthy insinuation of evil into a society or situation.

Apostates are slick. They are slippery. They slip in unnoticed and await their opportunity to do harm to the Body of Christ.

'Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves".'

Matthew. 7:15. NIV

How could False Christians get into true assemblies of the Saints?

The soldiers had gone to sleep at the post! The spiritual leaders in the churches had grown complacent and careless. This explains why Jude had to blow the trumpet to wake them up. Our Lord and his Apostles all warned that false teachers would arise, yet the churches did not heed the warnings. Sad to say, some churches are not heeding those same warnings today.

We must remember that the devil transforms himself 'AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT'.

'Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.'

I Peter, 5:8-9a, NIV

2. THE DESCRIPTION OF APOSTATES

'They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.'

Jude, 1:4b, NIV

'Even some of our churches today have false teachers 'GODLESS MEN' who 'HAVE SECRETLY SLIPPED IN' and are twisting the Bible's teachings to justify their own opinions, lifestyle, or wrong behaviour. In doing this, they may gain temporary freedom to do as they wish, but they will discover that in distorting Scripture they are playing with fire. God will judge them for excusing, tolerating, and promoting sin.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

First, the discovery of apostates in the Church does not disprove the Bible.

God is never taken by surprise. God is 'OMNISCIENT', which means that he is 'ALL KNOWING'. Whatever happens on earth, the Almighty never has to meet 'in emergency session' to discuss the events. In Heaven, there are no Extraordinary General Meetings to discuss the latest developments. God knew and knows everything that would happen from eternity's viewpoint.

Jude picks out three characteristics about those who had slipped into the church...

THE CHARACTER OF AN APOSTATE

Jude calls these people 'GODLESS'.

This seems to be one of Jude's favourite words. Whilst these men claimed to belong to God, they were, in fact, ungodly in their thinking and their living. They might have a form of godliness, but they lacked the force of godliness that lives in the true Christian.

In his Greek Lexicon, Thayer says that these men were 'WITHOUT REVERENTIAL AWE'.

They had no sense of awe of God. One of the many ingredients missing in their lives was a fear of God. They were ungodly, godless men, without reverential awe for God.

'They reject authority and slander celestial beings.'

Jude. 1:8b. NIV

Because they are ungodly, they have loose tongues and blaspheme God.

Not only that, they laugh and joke about things that are holy.

THE CONDUCT OF AN APOSTATE

Jude claims they 'CHANGE THE GRACE OF OUR GOD INTO A LICENCE FOR IMMORALITY'.

They wanted 'A LICENCE FOR IMMORALITY' because they are filled with lust. You see, where there is no reverence, there is no restraint. These people are indecent in their beliefs and their behaviour.

The sad reality is that the Church of God has often encouraged such behaviour.

If you sat down and made a list of how you want to live and behave, I am almost certain that I could find you a church that you will fit into whatever you put on that list. We have churches today that are ordaining into ministry those that are actively engaged in homosexuality. Some churches today do not condemn sexual relations outside marriage. Some churches say nothing about the grizzly practices of abortion. Some churches do not speak out against the abuse of alcohol because they are too busy selling it.

'Where sin increased, grace increased all the more... What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?'

Romans, 5:20b; 6:1-2, NIV

Your character will determine your conduct.

Where there is no reverence there will be no restraint. We used to hear and speak much about the need to live a holy life. A life that has been set apart from the world and dedicated to God. A life of holiness in which our character is actually becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. Your body is the temple of the living Qod – and we should be continually aware of this truth, for it places a huge responsibility on us as to how we should live.

Many believed they could do whatever they liked without fear of God's punishment.

They had a light view of God's holiness and his justice. Even today, some Christians minimise the sinfulness of sin, believing that how they live has little to do with their faith. But what a person truly believes will show up in how he or she acts. Those who truly have faith will show it by their deep respect for God and their sincere desire to live according to the principles in his Word.

'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.'

Titus. 2:11-14. NIV

THE CREED OF AN APOSTATE

Jude describes their doctrine: they 'DENY JESUS CHRIST OUR ONLY SOVEREIGN AND LORD'.

They would agree that Jesus Christ was a good man and a great teacher, but not that he was Eternal God come in human flesh. The first test of any religious teacher is: "IS JESUS CHRIST COD COME TO EARTH IN HUMAN FLESH?" Anyone who denies this basic doctrine is a false teacher no matter how correct he may be in other matters. If he denies the deity of Jesus Christ, something will always be missing in whatever he affirms.

Jude uses the word 'DESPOTES' for the word we have translated as 'LORD'.

We usually think of a 'DESPOT' as being a tyrant, but it simply means that the Lord is Sovereign. He is in total and complete control of everything. Of course, if people do not have reverence, they will have no restraint. If they have no reverence and restraint, they will accept no rule. Those who slide in will not bow to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

3. THE DESTRUCTION OF APOSTATES

'For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.'

Jude, 1:4a, NIV

These men became apostates because they wilfully turned away from the truth.

Why should these men be judged by God? To begin with, they had denied his one and only Son, Jesus Christ. That is reason enough for their condemnation. But they had also defiled God's people by teaching them that God's grace permitted hem to practice sin. Furthermore, they derided the doctrine of Christ's coming. "WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HS COMING?", they asked in order to cause the believers to doubt the validity of Jesus' promise. They mocked the very promise of Christ's coming and the judgment he would bring against the ungodly.

Of course, they did all these things under the guise of religion.

Therefore, this made their sin even greater. They deceived innocent people so that they might take their money and enjoy it in godless living. They will not escape.

4. THE DEFENCE AGAINST APOSTATES

'Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.'

Jude, 1:3, NIV

How do we truly 'Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints'...

We 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' when we submit to the truth.

If an apostate denies the only Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, what does the real Christian do? He receives the only Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. You must be born again. The first thing we should do is to make certain that we are actually in the Faith. In other words, ensure that you are saved.

We 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' when we study the faith.

You cannot defend something if you do not know what it is. Some folks think the Epistles were the wives of the Apostles. Some people do not bother to understand the Bible. They cannot be bothered to study God's Word.

'Some people avoid studying the Bible because they think theology is dry and boring. Those who refuse to learn correct doctrine, however, are susceptible to false teaching because they are not fully grounded in God's truth. We must understand the basic doctrines of our faith so that we can recognize false doctrines and prevent wrong teaching from undermining our faith and hurting others.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

The Bible battlefield today is primarily over three issues:

The Inerrancy of the Scriptures.
The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
The Salvation by Grace through Faith.

We 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' when we show the faith.

In other words, we must let it be shown in our lives. The proof of my preaching today is you! The greatest argument for what I preach for or against is the way you live. The greatest argument for Christianity is the life of the Christian. At the Brengle Holiness Institute, we were frequently reminded that the greatest need in society today is for us to live holy lives. The greatest need in the church today is for us to live a holy life.

We 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' when we stand for the faith.

There will be times when somebody is going to say something that is wrong, and you are going to have to say that it is wrong and point to that which is right. You do not need to be belligerent; you do not need to be contentious about it. But you do need to get a bulldog grip on the truth and not let it go. Even if they call you narrow minded, bigoted, opinionated, a fundamentalist, you must stand up for what is truth.

We 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' when we support the faith.

One of the tragic things of our day is when good people are in bad churches. Do not get me wrong, I am not suggesting that you find another Church! However, I am trying to ensure that you will always be a part of a Bible believing church. Whatever you do, do not fall into the trap of being a part of a church because it's the only place you have ever been to. Even if your grandmother brought your mother and she brought you, you must stand up in a church that stands for Christ and the Bible.

■ We 'CONTEND FOR THE FAITH' when we share the faith.

By this I mean that not only do we tell others about the Gospel, but that we also win souls to Jesus Christ. People tell us to keep the faith, but our faith is meant to be given away. If you cannot give away your faith, then I respectfully suggest that you should give your faith up.

"GUARD THE BIBLE WELL, ALL ITS FOES REPEL!"