

The Call To Earnestly Contend

Jude 1:1-4

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Let's read verses 1-4. I'll read it, you follow with me beginning in Jude verse 1.

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace and love, be multiplied." Jude says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

When I was a young boy we used to go out into the front yard and wrestle in the grass. I will never forget how sometimes you get your friend in a headlock and he would get you in the scissors, or he would have you in a headlock...you're kind of looking right at each other just inches away. Your face is in the grass, which you would be real itchy afterwards. You're in this hold, and we would sit there breathing on each other for hours. Now, as I look back, I think how stupid is that? Who wants to roll around in the grass with another guy, you know, hugging him or whatever. But, I do remember how strenuous and agonizing and difficult hand-to-hand combat or wrestling is.

When my little boy was about three or four or five, I got him boxing gloves. And I used to get on my knees (I wouldn't hit him, don't worry about that) and he would kind of box with me. But, he grew older and older, stronger and stronger until BOOM! He would hit dad once in a while. The first time he smacked me right in the nose. I took off the gloves and I said, "No more boxing around here." But the little bit of boxing that I've done, and I haven't done much other than with five-year-olds, is strenuous. It is arduous. It is agonizing.

Jude is a call to arms. He says in verse 3, "I wrote to exhort you that you should earnestly," the word is agonizo or agonize, "earnestly contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints." So, the book of Jude is a call to put on the boxing gloves. It is a call to put on the uniform to march in the Lord's army and to go out and be soldiers of the cross. It is a call to earnestly defend and contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints. Now, the place of the book of Jude in the New Testament is what is called the general epistles; which includes Hebrews, James, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, 1John, 2 John and 3 John, and the book of Jude. They are called general epistles because they weren't written to a specific church but to the church at large. Now the author's name is found in verse one, Jude. And he calls himself the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James. It is interesting that the name Jude is an abbreviation of Judas. It is also a different kind of variation of the name Judah, so Jude, Judas, and Judah. What do they mean? They mean praise. It is a common Jewish name. But how interesting that in the epistle that warns us of apostasy, bears the name of the greatest apostate

of all time, Judas Iscariot. Now, no doubt, it has changed to Jude so that we can differentiate between Judas Iscariot and Jude, the brother of James.

Now, what does he mean by brother of James? What he means by that is the James who wrote the epistle of James, another general epistle, is his brother. Now who are they? They are half brothers of Jesus. So Jude and James were the Lord's half brothers. But he doesn't open up with, "I'm the brother of Jesus. You better do what I tell you to do." He opens up with a servant of Jesus Christ, which is *doulos* or bondsman. So he is a slave of Jesus Christ. Now the brothers of Jesus, and there were more than just Jude and James, didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the son of God. It wasn't until after His death and resurrection that they came to faith in Jesus Christ. You can understand how hard it would be to believe your big brother is the Messiah. I mean you grew up with Him, you played with Him, you listened to Him snore in the bedroom. He was up above you in the bunk, you know. And then one day you go into your bedroom and He is standing on the toy box, "I am the way, the truth and the life." "Mom! Jesus is flipping out! Thinks He's the Messiah, the Savior of the world!" And they tried to rescue the Lord several times from what they thought to be His delusion that He was the Messiah. But, after His death and resurrection, Jesus visited these guys, and they came to faith in Him and became leaders of the early church.

Now the purpose for which Jude is written I have already alluded to, but let me give you a threefold purpose, an outline of the book of Jude. First, it is a call to contend for the faith, verse 3. And then secondly, it is to warn us about the apostates, verses 4-16. Third, it is to encourage us to grow spiritually, verses 17-25. We are going to look at the Christian's building program. How we build ourselves up in our most holy faith, keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the coming again of Jesus Christ. And then this beautiful letter of Jude ends with this marvelous doxology, verses 24-25, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." So, he opens with a warning and closes with this glorious benediction that God, the only wise God is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His presence with exceeding joy.

You say, "Well, John, why is this little epistle..." and by the way most New Testament scholars agree that this is perhaps the most neglected letter in the New Testament. And, very rarely will you hear anyone preach from it let alone go through it verse by verse. And, we are going to do that on Sunday mornings. We are going to look at every word in every verse, and we're going to study to learn this epistle. "...But why is it so important today?" For this reason. We, I believe, are living in the period of time of apostasy. I believe that in the last fifty years or so especially, it has escalated. And, we've seen a turning away from orthodox Christianity. You, as well as I, know that we have seen mainline denominations; the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans, turn away from the faith. We need to be warned today that not everyone that says, "Lord, Lord" is really a Christian. Not everyone that has a little collar, or clergy reverend before their name, or is a pastor is truly a messenger from God.

First Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times..." This is where I believe we are, "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons." Did you hear that? In the last days, many will depart from the faith. They will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. So, the Bible says that we need to earnestly contend for this faith that they're departing from and that has been delivered to us once and for all.

So, there are three things I want to look at in these four verses. First, I want to look at the army that is to contend. Second, I want to look at the commission to contend. Third, we will look at the enemy we are to contend with. Notice, first of all, who is doing the contending, or who is the army that is to contend. Well, first of all, our captain (verse 1) is none other than Jesus Christ. Amen? We are following Him into battle. But, it is not a battle that we hope we are going to win. It is a battle we have already won in Christ. Jesus said that He would build His church, and He said the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. Amen? So, I believe that Jesus, our captain, has already died for our sins, already been buried, already risen again, and that He is exalted and seated at the right hand of the Father. He is coming again to reign in power and glory, and that we're on His side. So, we're not fighting for victory, we're fighting from victory. Jesus Christ has already won the battle. So the victory has already been won. But, He is our great captain. We are following Him in the battle. Notice in verse 3 that we share, what is called by Jude here, a common salvation. Do you know that the ground is level at the foot of the cross? Do you know that everyone that is going to heaven is going on the same basis, the grace of God unto the work of Jesus Christ? The Bible says in Ephesians 4:4-6, that we have one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, one Father who is above all, through all, and in you all. That's Paul's southern accent, ya'll. So this is what we all share together in common. We are the church, so we are the army.

Now, I want you to notice in verse 1 how he describes this army in three ways: Sanctified in God the Father; and he says we are preserved in Jesus Christ; and called, I would add, by God the Holy Spirit. Jude has a thing about three's, and he puts a lot of things in three's. Here we see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all working together to bring about our salvation. Now, I want to say this because these are things that I am passionate about. What we're going to read here (and I am going to break these three things down, so listen to me very carefully. This is significant.) are true about every Christian irregardless of how long you have been saved, irregardless of how spiritual you are, irregardless of anything. If you are born again, all three of these are true about you. All Christians share equally in these things. That is one of the big problems. A lot of Christians fail to understand all that they have in Christ the moment they were born again. And, I believe the Christian life is to be lived by appropriation, not addition. What Paul said in Colossians is true that you are complete in Him. You are complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers. It means that you are shipshape. By the way, that word complete in Colossians 3 is a nautical term that literally means shipshape, ready to sail, fully rigged. You are complete. That doesn't mean you're living a complete life because you need to know what you have, and you need to appropriate it.

Let me look at these three things. First of all, we are sanctified by God the Father. The NASB

and other translations have, "You are beloved in God the Father," so it is rather difficult to know what is the best way to translate that, but it carries the two-fold idea that you are chosen or that God sanctified you. He set His love upon you, so salvation begins with God. Salvation began in the heart of God. Salvation begins with the love of God. And why, I don't know, but for some reason, God sets His love upon us. Amazing! Amen? I don't know why God would love me because I know me pretty well, and I'm not lovable. And yet, God loves me anyway. So, God sets you apart, sanctifies you, or places His love upon you. And, the grammar of the Greek here means that He loved you in the past, He keeps loving you in the present, and He will keep loving you on into the future. You got that? He loved you, He's loving you and He will continue to love you.

Secondly, we are preserved in Jesus Christ. Kenneth Weiss translates this, "to guard, to hold firmly, to watch or to keep." The same word is translated in verse 6, reserved, and again in verse 13, reserved, but in the negative sense. The angels which fell kept not their first estate. God has reserved, or is keeping, them for judgment. But if you are a child of God, He set His love upon you and He is preserving you, or keeping you. In John 17:11, Jesus says, "Holy Father, keep those whom thou has given me through thy name." I believe that God is keeping us or preserving us. And, down in verse 24 it says, "Now unto Him that is able to..." do what? It's okay, you can talk. The ushers won't throw you out. "...keep." Right? You're still not talking. "That's embarrassing, Pastor John, I don't want to say. It might be the wrong word and now everyone will look at me." What does it say in your Bible? "Now unto Him that is able to keep..." Thank you very much. Keep. To hold tight, to preserve, to watch over. Who is He keeping? You. What is He keeping you for? He's keeping you from falling. And, what's He going to do? He's going to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Thirdly, true of all Christians, we are the called. You know that became a synonym or just a title for Christians? You are the called. You're called out of darkness into light. You're called unto Jesus Christ. You're called into the church. You're called up to meet the Lord in the air one day. But this is talking about God's elective purposes in eternity past how God chose you, and then in the present period of time, God called you through the preaching of the Gospel through the work of the Holy Spirit, and you came to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is called the "call" of God. I remember I was a senior in high school. I was just getting ready to graduate. I wasn't a Christian. I was living kind of a wild life, and all of the sudden I just began to feel empty. All of the sudden I felt like—I need God. All of the sudden I just found this Bible. My sister actually snuck it into my room and gave it to me, praying "Lord, just help my brother." I still have that Bible. She gave it to me a few years ago, a little dog-eared paperback. It was Kenneth Taylor's Letters to the Philippians. My sister slipped it into my room, and she started praying for me. I opened it up and God, the Holy Spirit, began to speak to my heart. Eventually, I came to faith in Jesus Christ by reading God's Word. But, I remember so well...it was like, "Why am I reading the Bible? Why am I thinking about God? Why am I crying? Why am I praying? Why am I talking to God?" Because God, the Holy Spirit, called me. He reached out and called me.

Now, in different Bibles these three things; loved, preserved or kept, and called, are put in different orders. I don't want to bore you with all the grammatical Greek translation aspects, but I do think that they could be put in a theological order. This is how I would put them: 1) God set His love upon you, 2) God called you by His grace through His Spirit, 3) God is preserving you. He has saved you, He has called you, and He has preserved you. I believe the Bible teaches that there is this big theological rift between what are commonly called the Calvinists and the Arminianists. Calvinism tends to focus and emphasize the sovereignty of God in salvation; that God elects whom He wills, and that God chooses whom He wills. There are different degrees of Calvinism. Calvinists basically believe that we have nothing to do with our salvation, and that God chooses us. I don't disagree with that. I believe that, and I revel in that and I glory in that. That I am saved by the grace of God. That God elected me, chose me and called me. But over here on the other side, you have the Arminianists who tend to emphasize human freedom, or man's free will, or man's part in salvation. Unless you repent, unless you believe and unless you trust in Jesus Christ, you will not be saved. I agree with that. The Bible says whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. John wrote in his gospel and said, "that you might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name."

So, which is it? Does God choose me or do I choose Him? Am I saved by the elected purposes of God, or am I saved by my free choice to believe in Jesus Christ? You know what my answer is? Both. "Well, that doesn't make sense!" I know. But it's Biblical. I believe that we're saved by God's grace and that we're chosen in Him. Jesus said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." If you are a Christian today, glory in that God chose me by His grace. What an awesome thought! But you had to believe in Jesus Christ. Now, I can't reconcile that with my brain. It doesn't make sense to me, but I believe that they are reconciled in a higher unity. In other words, God knows what I don't know. God is smarter than I am. The danger is when we want to camp on one or the other extremes. When we want to say, "Well, I don't believe in human freedom," or "I believe only in God's sovereignty," or "I believe only in human freedom. I don't believe in God's sovereignty." Instead of accepting both as Biblical, and that they reconcile in a higher unity. In other words, God is wiser than us, God is smarter than us. You're going to have a nervous breakdown trying to figure it out. Instead of wrestling with it, just accept it. If I try to explain it, it doesn't make sense. But rather, I just worship God who has chosen me, and in some mysterious way, I believed in Him.

Now, I don't believe that regeneration comes before faith. I believe the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, you are given life. That's why I quoted that passage in John. I can quote many others. "These things are written that you might believe..." (faith) "...that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that through believing you might have life through His name." So, I believe the minute you believe... but you can't believe in Jesus unless God's Holy Spirit works in your heart and draws you to Him and convicts you, and convinces you of your need of a savior. Jesus said, "No man comes to Me unless the Spirit draws him." So, He gives us that ability to be drawn to Him. And, the moment I believe in Him I am born again, and I have faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, that's a big controversial theological issue we just touched on real lightly. I probably opened up a big can of worms that I shouldn't have. But, when I read about God loving me, and God calling me, and God preserving me, I see that I am saved by the grace of God. I'm saved by the love of God sending His Son to die for my sins, and believing in Jesus Christ brings forgiveness and the hope of heaven. And what results? Notice verse 2, three things; mercy, peace and love. He does not give us what we deserve (mercy); because of Christ's work on the cross we have peace and we experience God's love. Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by Jesus Christ and by the work of the Holy Spirit." So, who is the army? The called, the preserved and the loved are sanctified.

Thirdly, I want you to notice the commission. This is the heart of this introduction. He says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence...", or I sat down with every intention "...to write unto you of a common salvation." I wanted to write a happy letter. I wanted to write a positive letter. I wanted to talk about our salvation. I wanted to talk about the doctrine of justification by faith. And that's a great subject. I love that subject. But, he said when he began to write, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and directed me in a different way. He told me that it was needful to write unto you (verse 3) and to exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once and for all delivered unto the saints. It's unfortunate the King James has "once delivered". In the Greek, it actually reads once and for all. I'll tell you why that is so very important. Now, what is the faith that we are to agonize or contend for? What is the faith that we're to put on the boxing gloves that we are to fight for? Many saints in the past have actually given their lives for these essential orthodox truths that we believe in as Christians.

The faith is not your subjective individual faith in Jesus Christ. Some Christians have strong faith. Some Christians have weak faith. But the faith here is a reference to the body of truth that all Christians hold in unity. It's called "the faith" because he's talking about orthodox truth or doctrine that all Christians must agree on. You know, Christians can disagree on things. They can disagree on Calvinism and Arminianism. You can disagree on a pre-tribulation rapture or a post-tribulation rapture, amillennialism or different views on the tribulation. We can disagree on whether we should have different forms of church government, how we should worship in the church, what color the pews ought to be or the carpet in the church. We can disagree on those things, right? I am going to give you five things that Christians must agree on. These are the five things that we will fight over and that we will earnestly contend for. The list could be longer, but I'm trying to keep it as concise as I can.

Five things that all Christians need to believe in order to have orthodox Christian beliefs. First, the Bible is the Word of God. That's where it all starts. Everything comes from our understanding of what the Bible is. That is, this Book, and this Book only, is the Word of God. Amen? This is God's Word. And, in the Bible we find everything we need for faith and practice. So what I'm saying is that you don't need to go outside the Bible. You don't need other magazines, you don't have to have other books, you don't need to have other revelations. You don't need the Pearl of Great Price, The Book of Mormon, or the Doctrine of the Covenants that the Mormon church has. You don't need what the Jehovah's Witnesses offer when they come knocking at your door saying you need one of their Awake magazines to understand your Bible.

Tell them, "No, thank you." All that we need is found in God's Word. So, all Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God. But, I'd like to break it down a little bit more.

What we believe about the Word is what's called verbal plenary inspiration. We believe that the Bible is given by inspiration, not dictation, but inspiration. And, inspiration is that God superintended to human authors, so the very words that they wrote were the words of God. That's how to define what we call verbal plenary inspiration. And, by those terms, we mean verbal (the words) and plenary (all of them). So, I believe that the words, individual words and all of the words, are given by inspiration of God. Another thing that I believe about the Bible, and I think to be orthodox (you should believe it as well) is that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. When it talks about history, it is accurate. When it talks about geography, it is accurate. When it talks about salvation, it is accurate. There are no errors in the Bible, technically, the original manuscripts. But, our translations are extremely close to those originals; and anywhere there is a concern or doubt about a translation, it doesn't affect essential orthodox truth. These are things that are clearly taught in the Bible. That all scripture is given by what? Inspiration of God. Literally, it is God-breathed and God breathed it out. That holy men of God wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. To maintain the faith, we must have a high, uncompromising view of scripture. That's where it all starts.

Let me give you the second thing that we should fight over. There is only one God. Christianity is monotheistic. There is only one God. There aren't a bunch of gods. We don't believe in pantheism or polytheism. We didn't just make up a god or invent your own god. There is only one God..."Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

The third thing is the trinity. Christians are trinitarian. We believe that one God is three persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You say, "Well, I don't understand that." Neither do I...isn't it awesome! I have stopped trying to explain the trinity. It's not like an egg; shell, white and yolk. God is not an egg. It's not like water; frozen, liquid or steam. God is not H₂O. All these illustrations break down. What I would rather do, it's much like the doctrine I talked about, sovereign grace and human freedom, I just want to accept it and worship. God in three persons, blessed trinity! God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Not three gods—one God, three persons. One in essence. They are all divine. A Father who is God, a Son who is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. It is to their very essence, there is one deity or one God. So, the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the trinity.

Fourthly, all true Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh, the deity and the humanity of Christ. Compromise one or the other, you do not have orthodox Christianity. We all believe that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We covered that so thoroughly in the epistles of John. If you abide not in the doctrine of Christ, you have not the Father. He that has not the Father, has not the Son. You cannot deny the deity and full sinless humanity in Christ, and again this is a mystery, that He was one person with two natures. One person, two natures. Fully man, fully God. One person, Jesus Christ. You say, "I don't understand that." I know, isn't it awesome! I love it! If God were small enough for my brain, He wouldn't be big enough for my needs. God in three persons. God the Father set His

love upon me, that God the Son died on the cross for me, that God the Holy Spirit would regenerate me and give me new life! Oh how marvelous that is! What a glory that is! And so, we find that the whole Godhead is working together. Christians are trinitarian.

Last, but not least, here's number five. I wanted to keep it simple. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Salvation—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. When all around my soul gives way, He still is all my hope and my stay. My salvation isn't based on my performance. It's not based on my church attendance. It's not based on my church affiliation. It's not based on being baptized. We baptized over 140 people last Sunday. It was a glorious, glorious time! What a blessing it was. But being dunked in the water doesn't save you. It is an outward showing of an inward work. Christianity is not a right. It's not a ritual. It's not a creed. It's not a code of conduct. It's Christ! That's Christianity. And, faith in Jesus Christ alone saves. So, we're saved by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

Now, I want you to notice this. How do we contend? Let me give you just two quick points and I'll move on and wrap this up. You contend by your commitment to God's Word. Every Christian should commit to knowing the Bible, studying the Bible, believing the Bible, and integrating the Bible into their daily lives, their marriage, and in their thoughts. Every Christian should be thinking Biblically. Amen? Charles Spurgeon said, "We should eat into the very scriptures and feed on God's Word until our blood is." He said to feed until we're burping scripture. I want you to get God's Word on Sunday so when you leave here you burp scriptures in the parking lot. You think scripturally, you act scripturally, you think Biblically. You look at all of life through the lens of scripture. That's how we earnestly contend for the faith. Secondly, we support churches, ministers and ministries that are faithfully preaching God's Word.

Now, why should we earnestly contend? This is my third and last point. It's in verse 4. We should earnestly contend because there is an enemy. So, we saw the army, we saw the commission or the command to earnestly contend, and now I want you to look at the enemy. For there are certain men...he calls these apostates, "certain men." And, by the way, these apostates do not have the Spirit. Look at verse 19, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." I can't wait to get to verse 19. I needed to spill the beans right now. An apostate is a professor but not a possessor. He is not a person that lost their salvation. It's a person that never had their salvation. They said they believed in Jesus Christ, but they were never born again. Jude makes it very clear, "having not the Spirit." A lot of parallels, by the way, between 2 Peter and the book of Jude deal with the same subject. Peter says they are like dogs that vomit and then sniff back to find their vomit again. They're like pigs that have been washed but go back to wallowing in the mire. So, it's clear that they were not regenerated. They were never born again.

There's a lot of people that say they are Christians. They go through Bible college, they go through seminary, they get ordained and become pastors, but many times we have unregenerated, unsaved men who have not the Spirit in the pulpits of churches. It's a scary, scary thought. This is one of the reasons why we are in such a mess in America today. It's

because back in the twenties liberalism, or higher criticism as it was called, came into the church in Germany and made its way to America resulting in being hard pressed to find an evangelical seminary today that holds to Biblical inerrancy and believes the Bible is without error, authority and sufficiency. This is why we're on the downward trend in America. This is why the morals are decaying in our country. It's because the church is not healthy, and we don't have sermons from the book of Jude. We don't have teaching on sound doctrine, and the church is not the salt and light that it should be.

Now, Jude wastes no time in verse 4 describing the enemy. Again, I can't tarry long on these points, but look at these four things to describe the enemy. They are deceitful. It says in verse 4, they creep in unawares. The apostates are tares among wheat. Paul said, "I know that when I leave..." when speaking to the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20), "...shall wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock and some will arise even of your own midst." They don't announce, "Hi! I'm an apostate! I'm your new pastor, and I don't believe the Bible is the Word of God. I don't believe in the virgin birth." They don't say that. They want you to believe that they are orthodox. They want you to believe that they are sound doctrinally, but they begin to inject their poison. They begin to put doubts in people's minds. "Did God really say that? Is the Bible really reliable? Did God really create the heavens and the earth or, you know, just what can we believe? Was there really a talking snake that tempted Eve? Was the fall of man really true or is that just allegory?" And they begin to read into the Bible what they want it to say, but they creep in unawares. They don't announce, "I am an apostate!" They come in saying, "I am an evangelical Christian." Many times unawares their books are even sold in Christian book stores.

Secondly, notice they are ungodly. When we think of ungodly, we think of a murderer or a rapist. We think of lying, stealing and all these sins of the flesh. But did you know that you can be ungodly and yet be a professing Christian because you don't fear God? Isaiah 66:2 says, "They are not poor in spirit, they do not tremble at God's Word." They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. Jesus said to some questioners one time. He said, "You do error in that you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God." You don't know the scriptures, you don't know God's power. So, they are deceitful, they are ungodly, and again in verse 4, they are enemies of God's grace. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Now, there might be a different translation out there, which is fine, but I like to use the word license. Look up the word license in a dictionary. What is license? It's permission to do something. When you get a California State Driver's License, you know what the government of California is telling you? You have permission to drive a car on the highway. This is what they do. They take God's grace, and they turn the grace of God into a license to do whatever they want. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. That means, wanton reckless behavior...I can do whatever I want. Paul the apostle said, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" What was his answer? God forbid! It literally means, perish the thought! You know what is a real popular move today? It's to so emphasize the grace of God that they teach, "You can do whatever you want! You can live however you want! God won't judge your sin. God won't judge your behavior. He's a God of grace." Now, is He a God of grace? Absolutely! Is God merciful and kind? Absolutely! Is God forgiving? Absolutely! But, you're living very dangerously when you presume upon the grace of God and assume that it is a license for you

to go out and sin. I once had a woman look me right in the eyes and she said, "I know that I'm violating scripture to get a divorce. I have no reason, no basis, but I just want out of my marriage. I know I'm disobeying God, but God is a God of grace. He will forgive me." That's so scary. When you begin to think like that, you are in big trouble! I question your salvation. "God will forgive me! I'm just going to go and have an affair! My wife isn't satisfying me. My husband isn't a good husband, so I am going to find another man. I'm going to do whatever I want." God is a God of grace, but you cannot presume on His grace. God's grace is not a license for you to do whatever you want, to live however you want. Am I preaching legalism? No, because what we do doesn't win us favor or grace before God. God is a God of grace, but we dare not presume upon the grace of God thinking that I can sin so grace may abound.

Now, I'm a little bit hesitant. I'd like to break down some of the areas that is popular today of Christians and things to do because of God's grace, but it would touch the area of Christian liberty. I don't want to go there. Be careful, Christian! Be very careful, Christian, not to assume that God's grace is so great that you can (just listen to me, you can make your own application) do whatever you want to do because God is a God of grace. You need to ask yourself, "If I do this, will it grieve the Holy Spirit? If I do this, will it stumble someone else who is weaker in the faith? If I do this, will it bring me into bondage?" Those are principles that can be used to determine your liberty in Christ. I never want to presume upon God's grace and turn it into lasciviousness that I can live however I want, but this is what these false teachers do.

Lastly, in verse 4, they deny God's truth. Notice at the end of verse 4, it says that they "deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Which, by the way, Jesus Christ is our Lord God! You got that? When he says, "Our only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," they are one person. They are one in the same. So here's the biggie...you know what these deceivers, these apostates, these false professors... you know what they do? They deny the doctrine of Christ. "He wasn't virgin born. He wasn't sinless. He had a harem. He had other wives. He got married." On and on the list of apostate teaching has been promulgated about Jesus. "He wasn't God, He was just a good man. He was just a moral teacher." They deny either His deity or His humanity, both are heretical. And, they deny that Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. "There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved," the Bible says. When the Philippian jailer asked Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" What did Paul tell him? "Get baptized. Get a haircut. Put on Christian clothes. Go to Revival Christian Fellowship?" He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou will be saved." Period. I have nothing more to tell you other than if you trust in Jesus Christ, He will take you safely to heaven. He died for you on the cross. He came from heaven. He entered earth through the womb of a virgin, thus, being God, took on humanity. He lived a perfect, sinless life, and He went to a cross and died voluntarily, substitutionally, on the cross to take our sins. He was buried and rose from the dead three days later conquering sin. And, when He rose from the dead, it wasn't a mystical, spiritual resurrection. It was a physical, bodily resurrection. He ascended 40 days later up into heaven, and He told all His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Here it is, God loves you. God sent His Son to die for you. You are a sinner. We've all fallen short. We've all broken God's laws. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. So, the gospel is: Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures,

Jesus was buried according to the scriptures, and Jesus rose from the dead according to the scriptures.

And, what I want to do now, as I close this sermon, I want to ask you...Are you born again? Have you trusted Jesus Christ or are you just a professor? You just come to church, maybe even carry a Bible, or maybe you're just visiting or checking it out. But, have you yet trusted Jesus Christ as your savior? The moment you do that in faith, trusting that He is the savior, believing that He died for you, and you ask Him to forgive your sins; the Holy Spirit will come into your heart, and He will give you new life and make you a child of God.