

The Book of Jude

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon on the Book of Jude emphasizes the importance of contending for the faith and understanding the truth about God, ourselves, sin, and Christ.

Scripture: Jude 1:3, Jude 1:19

Topics: "The Nature of Truth", "Contending for the Faith"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the significance of the Book of Jude, which was originally intended as an encouraging letter but became a call to contend for the faith due to the rise of false teachings. He warns that false teachings distort the truth about God, ourselves, sin, and Christ, leading to disastrous consequences. Tozer stresses the importance of understanding and conforming to the truth as revealed in Scripture, urging believers to build themselves up in faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, and maintain love for others while standing firm in truth. He encourages Christians to be compassionate yet firm in their beliefs, looking forward to the mercy of Christ's return. Ultimately, Tozer calls for a balance of courage and tenderness in the pursuit of truth.

Transcript

"The Book of Jude"

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I want to talk on that book of Jude this morning. Bringing again after the passing of some years a bit of attention to this little, but powerful book. Now the man Jude, a brother of Christ, had planned to write an encouraging letter just as you might sit down to write your friends a letter of encouragement. He had planned it dealing with what he called our common salvation. But he said it became necessary rather as he was moved, impressed by the Holy Ghost to write something else altogether. An unpleasant circumstance had risen which forced him to write quite another kind of letter from the good encouraging letter that he had planned. Certain men had crept in unnoticed. Now those men were personally men of evil lives. They were and had been foreseen and condemned by the Lord Himself when He was with them. And they taught doctrine that was contrary to the Christian faith. Now he writes to arouse the victims of these teachers to contend for the truth.

Now, I want to talk just a little because I want my emphasis to fall elsewhere, but a little about this false teaching. Not naming any false teaching specifically, and I do not use this because I think there's any false teaching here. We have had amazing success under God in the last years in keeping from our fellowship, those who would subvert us. They just don't feel healthy around here. The atmosphere is not wholesome and they don't stay very long. So, this is general rather than specific, but because it is for the whole church of Christ, it certainly is also for us.

Now, what do we mean by false teaching? Well, it means teaching that things are otherwise than they are. Now, things are, both physical things and spiritual things are. They are and you can put a period after that. And when we have discovered or had revealed to us the facts about them, either things material or things spiritual, then we are morally required to acknowledge those facts, and to make our teaching conform to them. That's also very simple that I almost apologize for saying it. But it is the broad framework upon which everything else must hang, that things are as they are whether we like them or not, that's the way they are. God made things and things are. Physical material things are and Spiritual things are.

Now, it is our business to find out how they are. Accept them as they are and then make our teaching conform to them as they are. Now that's rather simple, isn't it? Now, correct doctrine then is of vital importance, because it is simply the teaching of things as they are. There are five there and I say that's five, ten over there and I say that's ten. It is July, what's today? The third, and I say it's July 3. That doesn't take genius, that's just stating things as they are. This is Chicago, Illinois, not Memphis, Tennessee. This is Chicago, Illinois. This is July, not August, this is the third not the ninth. This is 1955, not 1957. This, these are this country is the United States of America. Not some other country, not England not any of the Scandinavian countries.

And so, telling the truth about things is simply finding out what they are and then conforming my statement to their facts. Now it's so as spiritual truths. When a truth has been revealed in the book of God, our business is to find out what that truth is. And then in all of our teaching, conform to that truth. Not edited, not change it, but let it stand just as it is. It is the truth of

God declared as it is and don't try to change it. It would be ridiculous of me to try, by some twist of logic or sophistry to make this to be August when it's July; to make it to be the ninth when it's the third; to make this to be winter when it's summer; to make this country to be Canada when it's the United States. Truth is just as it is. God Almighty has made the world to be a mathematical universe. And He runs all things according to mathematical laws. And He has a moral world which runs according to moral laws as exact and as unchanging as mathematical laws. So non-conformity to the truth anywhere brings disaster. Let an engineer be wrong about a position, and let him build according to that wrong concept and his building will collapse around him. Let a navigator be wrong about something and he will run on a rock and his old ship will shudder as it runs onto a sandbar or a rock and will settle in the water and sink out of sight because a mistake has been made. The man has not gone according to truth. Non-conformity always brings disaster wherever it may be. And the vastness and hugeness of the disaster depends upon the high-level or low-level of the facts we have before us.

If I started with a compass that was backwards-we were driving the other day in Mr. McAfee's car, and we went west all the time. No matter which way we turned the compass said west. There was something wrong with the compass. Now, that didn't do us a great harm, because there were markers and we didn't go according to that. But if there had been something serious and we'd had to know when our lives depended upon it, we might have left our bones someplace, because a compass went wrong. And so,

non-conformity, failure to stay by facts as they are, will bring disaster if we depend upon it.

Now, false teaching is the falsifying of data. It's falsifying of data about God, ourselves, sin, and Christ. First of all, any false teaching must begin with the wrong concept of God. You can put that down in the back of your Bible or the back of your memory, that any false teaching of any sort, must begin with a wrong concept of God. It can't be otherwise. Nobody who holds a right concept of God can go very far wrong in anything else. And all the basic, great mistakes that have been made, the great fundamental errors have all rested down around the concept of God. Men are not willing to let God be what He says He is. They're always trying to change God and trying to make him to be other than what He is. God is, and we better accept Him as He is. God is, and the angels want Him to be what He is. God is, and the elders and saints and heavenly creatures want Him to be what He is. We'd better want Him to be what He is too, and conform to what he is. Any structure that is crooked, or any foundation that is crooked, will bring the structure down in time. It will either sink or it will collapse or lean or fall over, but it will not stand long. Or if it does, it will lean as the leaning tower there in Italy.

Now God-of all the foundations-God is the most important, because God is God and made the heaven and earth and all the things that are therein. And it is a great error, it would be a great error for a man or a woman to go a lifetime thinking they were talking to the God of heaven and earth and find that they were talking to a god which they had confounded out of their own imagination. It would be a tragic calamity to the human spirit for me to pray a lifetime and preach a lifetime about a God that wasn't the true God at all, but some other god which was a composite of ideas drawn from philosophy and psychology and other religions and superstitions. No, God is what He is. And we had better learn what God is and then conform our teachings to God. If we take away any of the attributes of God, we weaken our concept of God. We do not weaken God, but we weaken our concept of God.

Christian scientists have taken all the justice and judgment and hatred of sin out of the nature of God and they have nothing but a soft God left. There are those who have taken love and grace out and have nothing but a God of judgment left. There are those who have taken away the personality of God and have nothing but a mathematical God. That's the God of the scientists. All these are false, inadequate conceptions of God.

While God is a God of justice, He's a God of grace, and while He's a God of righteousness, He's a God of mercy. While he is a God of mathematical exactness, He is also a God that could take babies in His arms and pat their heads and smile. He is a God that could forgive and a God that does forgive. So we had better make the study of this Bible of ours, the business of our lives, to find out what God is.

And then conform our views to God, and then ourselves. That's this second thing where we make a mistake in any kind of false teaching, because any wrong idea of God is bound to give us a wrong idea of ourselves. Some people approach God through science, through the study of anthropology. But anthropology without theology is bound to arrive at an error at last, bound to arrive at the dead end street. You and I can only explain ourselves in the light of the doctrine that God made us out of the dust of the ground and blew into our nostrils the breath of life. And so, man became a living soul.

Science has discovered many things about God, but they have not discovered it in context. They have not begun with God and reasoned down to His world; they have begun with the world and tried to reason up with God and stop short of finding God, and the result is only tragic to everybody. If a man is wrong about God, he's bound to be wrong about himself. If He's wrong about the artist, he'll be wrong about the picture.

If he's wrong about the potter, he'll be wrong about the vessel. If he's wrong about God, he'll be wrong about the creature. So, while multiplying scientific facts all around about us, men are wrong because they have left God out and say in their heart, there is no God. Or if there is a God, He's a god of mathematics and laws, but not the God as the Bible makes Him out to be. That is all wrong.

If you believe you're any better than God says you are, you're in error. If you believe you're any different from what God says you are, you're in error. You have falsified the data or somebody has falsified the data and made you a victim. No, no, my brother, believe about yourself what God says about you. Believe you're as bad as God says you are and believe you're as far from him as God says you are. And then believe in Christ who can come as near to Him as he says you can. And accept what He says about you as being true.

My friend, you cannot know truth about yourself unless you first know truth about God. You came from the hand of God, and back to God you must go for better, for worse, for judgment, or for blessing. And until we take God in and understand God, and let God be what He claims to be, and believe about ourselves what God says about us, we're believing false doctrine.

Then there's sin. Now sin cannot be understood until we believe in God and believe what God has said about ourselves. Sin is that intrusive phenomenon, that ever present, ubiquitous phenomenon. There it is, hate and lying and dishonesty and murder and crime and injustice, necessitating law and police and jails and galluses and locks and graves. There are those who would deny it, and of course that's falsifying the data. There are those who would rename it and they're falsifying data. There are those who would treat it as a disease and they're falsifying data.

God says that it's a breaking of the law. God says it's a rebellion against His will. God says that it's a nature inherited from our fathers and mothers. God says that it's an act against the faith and love and mercy of God. God says it's rebellion against the constituted authority of the Majesty on high. God says it's iniquity and personally chargeable to the one who commits it. God says the soul that sinneth it shall die. And we had better believe about sin what God says about sin or we will be falsifying the data. And falsified data in spiritual things is more terribly wrong and will bring more terrible consequences and falsifying data in material things.

The doctor who miscounts a number of, or the amount of that which he gives a patient may kill the patient. That would be only to destroy a body. The preacher who misjudges or miscounts the truth concerning sin and man and God will damn his hearers which is infinitely more terrible. Truth concerning God means that I must accept God's sovereignty, God's holiness, God's justice, God's grace, God's love and all that the Bible says about God. Concerning myself, it requires that I must believe in myself as a fallen image of God, one who once bore His image, but fell.

Now, the fourth is Christ Himself. For if I do not have the right concept of God and of myself and of sin, then I will have a twisted and imperfect concept of Christ. And I have no hesitation in saying that it is my honest and charitable conviction, that the Christ of the average religionist today is not the Christ of the Bible at all, but a manufactured Christ, a Christ painted on canvas, a Christ drawn from cheap poetry, a Christ of the liberal and the soft and timid person, a Christ that has not in Him the iron and the fury and the anger, as well as the love of grace and mercy, He had who walked in Galilee. If I have a low conception of God, I have a low conception of myself and if I have a low conception of myself, I have a dangerous conception of sin. And if I have a dangerous conception of sin, I have a degraded conception of Christ.

So, here's the way it works. God is reduced and man is degraded and sin is underestimated, and Christ is disparaged. No wonder Jude said the terrible things that he said. And I recommend, that some of you that are so nice you're no good, I recommend you read the book of Jude once. I recommend you read that book of Jude. Get your teeth filed to a sharp, eating edge. Get your teeth into something. Dare to believe something, and dare to stand for God. This awful day of so called tolerance. This awful day when men are ready to believe anything.

No, my brethren, you and I are not called to smile and smile and smile. We are called sometimes to frown and rebuke with all longsuffering in doctrine. We must contend, but not be contentious. And we must preserve truth, but injure no man. We must destroy error, but not harm people. Where men were wrong in other days, they contended and in contending became contentious. They tried to preserve truth, and so to do it they destroyed those who held error. All this is wrong. Let us preserved truth, but injured no man. Faith of our fathers we will love, both friend and foe in all our strife and love Thee too; to preach Thee too as love knows how, to kindly deed and virtuous life.

Now in closing, here is what he says to us. He says in verse nineteen, these be they. Let's pity them. Let's be sorry. let's pray for them. Let's weep over them. Let's turn away from them, these be they. Verse twenty, but ye beloved. Now he's come to his own, the true believers in God and Christ, but ye beloved. Then He gives them four or five things to do. I will pass swiftly over them. Building up yourselves in your most holy faith. Are you these days building up yourselves? Have you read a book of the Bible through recently? Have you done any memorization of Scripture texts or Scripture these days? Have you sought to know God or are you looking to the radio for your religion? Or have you a Bible and do your study it? Build up yourselves in your most holy faith? That's one.

Praying in the Holy Ghost. I do not hesitate to say that most praying is not in the Holy Ghost. The reason we do not pray in the Holy Ghost is because we do not have the Holy Ghost in us. No man can pray in the Spirit, except his heart is a habitation for the Spirit. It's only as the Holy Ghost has unlimited sway within us that we're able to pray in the Holy Ghost, and I do not hesitate to say that five minutes of prayer in the Holy Ghost will be worth more than one year of hit and miss praying that isn't in the Holy Ghost. Pray in the Holy Ghost.

Third, Keep yourselves in the love of God. Be true to the faith, but be charitable to those who are in error. Never feel any contempt for anybody. No Christian has any right to feel contempt, for contempt is an emotion that can only come out of pride. So, let's feel no contempt. Let's be charitable and loving toward all while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

And then looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of course, that is the second coming of Jesus. Looking for Jesus Christ's coming. The mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that is coming. Wonderful isn't it that His mercy will show itself at His coming? Even His mercy will show itself then as it did on the cross as it does in receiving sinners, as it does impatiently looking after us Christians and it will show itself at the coming of Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

And then, verse 22, some have compassion making a difference, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh. There's a charge that we should win others, that we should do everything in our power to bring others to Christ, saving them with fear, pulling them out of the fire. Wesley all his life referred to himself as a brand plucked from the burning. He never called himself anything else than a brand plucked from the burning. He knew that he was on fire already with the

hot flames of hell when Jesus Christ grabbed him out of the fiery pit and extinguished the fire by His own blood. And Wesley became Wesley. And he never dared to rise and think of himself as a great Oxford man or a great genius. Always He thought of himself as a brand plucked from the burner.

So now we look forward to Jesus Christ's coming, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here was what the old silk weaver said about it. He says, a few short lines from Terstegen. There is a balm for every pain in medicine for all sorrow, the eye turned backward to the cross and forward to the morrow. That's what Paul said, that ye do show forth the Lord's death till what? Till He come. There's a balm for every pain, medicine for all sorrow. Some of the old saints in days gone by called the communion service, the medicine of immortality. And we couldn't follow them in every one of their beliefs, but that I think they were right. The medicine for all sorrow, and I turned backward to the cross and forward to the morrow, the morrow of the glory and the song, when he shall come. The morrow of the harping and the palm and the welcome home.

Meantime, in His beloved hands are our ways. Meantime, what are we going to do? Give up to Thee? Meantime, what are we going to do? Give up to the liberal? Meantime, what are we going to do? Give up to the dead church? Meantime, what are we going to do? Give up to those who have chosen to walk in the low shadows of Christianity? Never! Dare to contend without being contentious. They are to preserve truth without hurting people. Dare to love and be charitable and there, meantime in His beloved hands are our ways and, on His heart, the wandering heart at rest, and comfort for the weary one who lays his head upon His breast.

Thank God for the old silk weaver who walked with his Savior and was not, for God took him. So let us think of the medicine of immortality today. Let us by the grace of God, with charity for all and hatred toward none, but determination to be loyal to truth if it kills us. Let us put our chin a little higher and our knees a little lower. Let's look a little further in to the throne of God where Jesus Christ sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Let us be courageous, but tender; severe, but kind. Let us pray in the Holy Ghost and keep ourselves in the love of God and build ourselves up in the most holy faith and win all we can until the day of the glory and the song. Amen.

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