

Contending for the Faith

by Voddie Baucham

Voddie Baucham emphasizes the urgent need for all believers to actively defend and uphold the Christian faith in a culture that often promotes tolerance over truth.

Duration: 28:34

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, James 1:2, Jude 1:3-4

Topics: "Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects the love of God. He dismisses the idea that preaching the word of God is only for those trained in apologetics or philosophy, stating that everyone should strive to be a positive example to others. The speaker also criticizes the notion that the Great Commission, which calls for making disciples of all nations, was only meant for the original disciples or missionaries. He urges believers to stand firm in their faith and proclaim the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ, regardless of the consequences.

Transcript

Did you join me in a word of prayer? God, we are so grateful, again, for another opportunity to gather together as your people and to worship you and to proclaim your goodness and to proclaim your glory, to proclaim your majesty. And as we come to this moment, this time where we will feast together on the bread of life, we ask that you would feed us until we want no more. Pray that you would teach us, that you would encourage us, that you would convict us, that you would transform us and conform us to the very image of Christ, in whose name we pray and ask all of these things.

Amen. I am honored to be here with you today, and I mean that. I have looked forward to this for quite some time.

And I want you to know that you helped me today with my prayer life, because as I got up this morning and walked around the campus, I envied you for being able to be here and study here, and I had to pray and confess that sin of envy. But it is indeed an honor to be here. And thank you, thank you for that song.

It was especially meaningful to me. I travel about ten days a month doing different conferences and things like this, and that means that ten days a month I'm away from my home, but, you know, when we're there, we worship together as a family every morning. And my children, my older children, I have a 15-year-old daughter, a 12-year-old son, and a 13-month-old son.

And the older two are both classical pianists, and they both, you know, study and play and compete and all the rest of that stuff. And I never learned to play, but as a family, we would always gather around God's Word every morning, and we would sing songs together. So on March 10th of this year, I turned 36 on March 11th of this year.

On March 10th of this year, I called the kids' piano teacher, and I said, I have to learn how to play. I want to lead my family in worship. I want to play, and I want us to sing, and I want you to teach me.

So on March 10th, I took my first piano lesson, and the first song that I ever learned to lead from the piano was In Christ Alone. So this morning has been very meaningful for me already. If you would, open your Bibles with me this morning to the book of Jude, second to the last book in the Bible, this small letter sometimes referred to as a postcard, the book of Jude.

Don't ask what chapter. If you ask what chapter, we'll make you start your seminary education all over again. Let's read those first four verses.

Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to talk to you this morning about contending for the faith. Contending for the faith. Now, that makes us uncomfortable, and I want you to know why.

It makes us uncomfortable because we live in a culture that values tolerance above all else. In fact, some would argue that tolerance is the only virtue that we have remaining upon which we agree en masse in our culture. And when I say tolerance, don't be confused.

I'm not talking about the kind of tolerance that led Voltaire to write, I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. I'm talking about the kind of tolerance that led one public school superintendent in a very large school district in the United States of America to say, it is the mission of the public schools not to tolerate intolerance. I've been trying to meet her.

I want to meet her. I really do. I just want to ask, you know, Ms. Superintendent, ma'am, lady, doctor, ma'am, can I just ask you just one little old itty-bitty question? What do you call the act of not tolerating intolerance? Could it be intolerance? You see, the new tolerance argues that you can't disagree.

You must embrace. And so this idea of contending for the faith is completely untenable. We don't understand that.

That does not compute. That is intolerant. And in our culture, that's the only thing that we absolutely positively refuse to tolerate.

But I agree with G.K. Chesterton who wrote, tolerance is the virtue of a man without conviction. I'm not tolerant. Not in the new sense of the word, because I serve a God who's not tolerant.

He's just not. Have you read the Ten Commandments lately? This is a paraphrase, but it works for me. God says, I'm God all by myself.

You don't get another one. I won't tolerate it. Amen.

And so in the midst of this culture that won't tolerate intolerance, we are called upon to contend for the faith. Now let me be clear. I'm not saying that we ought to be contentious.

And I'll be the first to admit I struggle with that, because there's this guy who lives on the inside of me. His name is Bad Vody. I'm not even sure that brother's saved, you know.

I try to let him out once a week late at night when nobody's around, you know. But every now and then he'll raise up his old ugly head. But we're not called to be contentious.

We are, however, called to contend. And I just want to say a few words about Jude's command for us to contend for the faith. The first is this.

Contending for the faith is the responsibility of every believer. Look at what he says here. Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to whom? To whom is he writing? Let's see.

To those who are the called. I'm claiming that one. Amen.

Anybody else want to jump on that bandwagon with me? To those who are the called. Okay, let's look at number two. Beloved in God the Father.

I put two hands up on that one. Amen. That's me.

And kept for Jesus Christ. I don't know what else to raise on that one, but I'm in that one. Amen.

It's almost as though he is using a teaching tool here to refer to one group of individuals three times using three different terms. This is for all believers. The called.

The beloved in God the Father. Those kept for Jesus Christ. That means every last one of us who is a blood-washed, born-again, Bible-toting, on-the-way-to-heaven follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of us have been called upon to contend earnestly for the faith. To agonize greatly, he says, for the faith. For all of us.

Sometimes we try to side-swipe certain things like this. We want to say, no, no, no, that's just for the Dr. Molars of the world. That's just for those people who are trained in apologetics or trained in philosophy.

That's not for me. But my job is just to love on people and to live my life in such a way that they will look at me and say, I've been watching the way you mow your lawn. There is something different and magnificent about the way that you trim your hedges.

Please tell me what I must do to be saved. Don't we do that? We do that with the Great Commission. Bad Voting loves it when people try to side-swipe the Great Commission.

He does. That's one of those times when I gladly let him out. Go ye therefore and make disciples of Pentateuch, every people group.

That was for the original hearers. Oh, really? Is that your final answer? Well, okay, maybe it wasn't just for the original hearers, but it was for those people who were called to missions. Really? You like that one better? You tell me when you're ready to stop, because I've got a friend who wants to talk to you about that.

It wasn't for me. Oh, really? Because if you keep reading, he says, lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age. If you don't get go ye therefore, you don't get lo, I'm with you.

I don't know about you, but I want some lo, I'm with you. Amen? Which means I get go ye therefore. It's the responsibility of every believer to contend for the faith.

This is for all of us. Every last one of us is called upon to plant our feet, to square our shoulders, to hold our heads high, and give an account to anyone who would ask us the reason for the hope that is within us, and to do so with gentleness and with reverence. Contending for the faith is the responsibility of every believer.

That includes me. That includes you. Secondly, contending for the faith is a primary, not a secondary issue.

Look at the next part of this passage. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation. Now, maybe some of you haven't been here long enough, but let me help advance your theological education.

Salvation is a primary issue. Amen? You don't get more primary than that. He says, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation.

Here's what's interesting. Can you imagine if all of a sudden there's a press conference called today? Can you imagine? I mean, the president was going to make a speech. He was going to address the nation.

And by the way, that just crawls all over me. Not that I'm against the president addressing the nation. Not that I'm against any of that.

Not that I don't like it. Just whatever. W's fine with me.

He's a good old Texas boy. He's fine. Drives me crazy sometimes, but he's fine.

That's not what I'm saying here. Here's what I can't stand. If he's going to make a speech for two days, they tell me what he's going to say.

Two days. At one point, the president is expected to drive home the point. Let the man.

That's bad voting right there. Okay. And then it gets worse.

Two days, they tell me what he's going to say. He makes his speech, and then for two hours, they tell me what he said. And half of that doesn't match what I just heard.

Amen? Imagine if you will. Two days set up. He's going to make this speech.

He's going to address the nation over the primetime airways, and he stands and he says, I was making every effort to make a speech to you today concerning those people in New Orleans who desperately need to be rescued from the rising water. However, I felt compelled to speak to you concerning whatever

comes after that is a primary, not a secondary issue. This is not the president of the United States, but an apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who says, I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, but it's necessary for me to make a turn here.

It's necessary for me to appeal to you here, to appeal to you that you would agonize greatly for the faith, that you would contend earnestly for the faith. This is a primary, not a secondary issue. This is of utmost importance.

You'll understand why in a moment. But for now, let's look at this third principle. Contending for the faith is the responsibility of every believer.

It's a primary, not a secondary issue. Thirdly, it requires familiarity with God's revealed truth. Look at what he says here.

That you would contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints. I love that. It's a done deal.

That you would contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints. Not that you would contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all handed down to the clergy. That was once for all handed down to the priesthood.

The faith that was once for all handed down to the saints. By the way, we are not called upon to contend for the way we were raised. Amen.

God bless your mama. But she's fallible. God bless your Sunday school teachers.

But they're fallible. We're called upon to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints. That's you.

And that's me. It's the responsibility of every believer. And if we are going to conduct ourselves accordingly, we must be familiar with God's revealed truth.

Part of the problem that we have in our day is that people are contending for things other than that which was handed down to the saints. People are contending for their own sort of theological predilections. People are contending for their own preferences.

People are contending. We have people arguing over contemporary versus traditional music. Help us! You know what that argument is? What we call traditional has its origins somewhere around the 1950s.

You know, three hymns and a special followed by three points and a poem and an altar call? That's somewhere around the 1950s, all right? What we call contemporary, where we got the band who comes up and they play and all that, that has its origins somewhere around the 1970s. So you know what we're arguing about in our churches? God lives in 1950. No, he doesn't.

He lives in 1970. He lives in 50s. No, he lives in the 70s.

Hello, somebody, it's 2005! We contend for the color of carpet, but we won't contend for the faith. We contend for our own preferences, but we won't contend for that which serves as the foundation upon which everything that we are is built. Why is this so important? Two reasons.

If we don't contend, two things happen. Look there in the next verse, verse 4. Why is this so important? I'm glad you asked. It's so important because there are individuals who call themselves Christian and are not.

It's so important because there are individuals who say that they represent us, but they do not. This is so important because there are those who have crept in unnoticed, who are redefining what Christianity is all about, and undermining our witness in the culture. Can I just give you one example? Listen to the words of John Shelby Spong.

I want to meet him too. No, I don't. Prayer life is already tough enough.

John Shelby Spong served as a bishop in the Episcopal Church. He was a pastor for some three decades. Best-selling author.

Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School. Listen to what he writes in his book, *A New Christianity for a New World*. I do not believe that Jesus entered this world by the miracle of a virgin birth, or that virgin births occur anywhere except in mythology.

I do not believe that he was born in Bethlehem, or that he fled to Egypt. I do not believe that a literal star guided literal wise men to bring him gifts at his birth. I do not believe that the events Christians celebrate at Easter was the literal resurrection of the three days dead body of Jesus.

He didn't believe any of the essentials of the historic Christian faith. But not only does he call himself a Christian, but he is often called upon by individuals like Larry King to represent Christianity. When the late Peter Jennings had a primetime special called *The Search for the Historical Jesus*, I began to look at the names of some of the characters that he brought on.

And there was something disturbingly familiar about all of them. Most of them had some alignment with, or allegiance to, the Jesus Seminar. But they were referred to as experts and New Testament scholars.

And when he should have been saying the majority of these individuals who are outside of the pale, who are not Christian by their own profession according to the Bible's definition of Christianity, most of these individuals believe this about the gospel. But instead, he would make statements like, the majority of scholars agree. Certain persons have crept in unnoticed.

Were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation. And they do two things. They turn grace into lawlessness.

And they deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. We see how these individuals are denying Jesus Christ. And we like to point outwardly at those individuals.

And say, that's them, that's those people, those are those outsiders. You know what's interesting? On that first point, turning the grace of God into lawlessness, I turn your attention to my hometown, Houston, Texas. Where year before last, the pastor of the largest black Southern Baptist church in the country at that time, came into sharp focus in our nation.

He came into focus because there was a scandal in the church. This man was a past moderator of Union Baptist Association, the largest association of churches in the world. And the reason that he came into such sharp focus was because there were accusations made against him of sexual harassment.

Against a man who used to be on his staff. He denied these accusations, vehemently denied these accusations. This man is disgruntled, this man is trying to bring me down.

This man released tapes. They were vile. They were absolutely disgusting.

Damning pieces of evidence. This man was telling the truth. This pastor gave himself four weeks of paid leave to deal with his issues.

And still serves at the helm in that church. Under the guise of what? Grace. Grace.

We've heard it before. We don't need to shoot our wounded. We need to show grace.

You know what grace means? Grace means God should have killed me, but he didn't. Grace doesn't mean I can live any way I want to and still qualify as beyond reproach. You see, grace doesn't mean that 1 Timothy 3 no longer applies for those who wish to stand behind this sacred desk and call themselves pastor.

Grace doesn't mean that we erase Titus chapter 1 or consider it something that was just for those individuals at that time, so that we can sideswipe the requirements of those who call themselves the leaders and shepherds of God's people. That is turning grace into lawlessness. There is a higher standard, and we're called to it.

Do I believe this man should have been taken out and given 30 lashes? No. Do I believe that he should have just been shunned? No. Do I believe he should have been disciplined? And I don't believe he should stand behind that pulpit and call himself a pastor.

And virtually nothing was said, and there were two reasons for that. Number one, because we shy away from issues like that, because we don't want to seem like people who are not gracious. And number two, because he's black, and for whatever reason, in the SBC, we still play the race card.

And everybody in the SBC knew the minute white leaders and white pastors would have opened their mouths, they'd have been crucified. Here's what's ironic. You sexually harass men who work for you, and that's excusable.

You call a black pastor to the carpet for immorality. That's inexcusable. God help us, because we're turning the grace of God into lawlessness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Contending for the faith is the responsibility of every believer. It is a primary, not a secondary issue. It is as important as anything else that we deal with as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It requires a level of familiarity with God's revealed truth. And the reason that it's so important is that there are those who have crept in unnoticed, who call themselves Christian, all the while undermining and denying the very core of the historic Christian faith. And if we do not contend, they get to represent us unhindered.

I could have come and talked to you about the tragedy in New Orleans. However, I felt compelled to urge you, to admonish you, to beseech you, to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all handed down to you and to me. With every fiber of your being, with every breath in your body, with every moment that God grants you, stand for, contend for, represent and proclaim the authentic, unadulterated gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and let the chips fall where they may.

Because there are some things worse than being called intolerant by this culture in which we live. Would you bow with me? Father, as we bow before you, we say to you that we are grateful. Grateful for your word, grateful for your truth, grateful for these moments that you've given us in your presence.

Pray that the things that you have taught us would sink deeply and that we would bear them in the forefront of our minds as we go throughout the balance of our day and the balance of our days contending for the faith, regardless of the cost. We pray these things and ask these things because we believe that they are in accordance with the will and the nature and the authority of Jesus, who is the Christ. And all God's people said, Amen.

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