

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL
COME, LORD JESUS
THE GOD WHO MAKES ALL THINGS NEW
Defending the Faith

When we think of defending our faith in Jesus, our thoughts may turn to taking a personal stand in defense of the resurrection of Christ. We may study out ways to defend our faith to skeptics. We may hope and pray that if called upon we will be courageous enough to die for our faith rather than deny our Lord. However, it may never occur to us that situations will arise where it becomes necessary to defend that faith even within the church family.

It matters what we believe. It has become commonplace for people to conclude that it makes no difference what we believe as long as we are sincere! If sincerity were a magic potent for making something true, it would apply to any area of life, not just religion. For example, a man hears noises in the house one night and decides a burglar is at work. He gets his gun and shoots the burglar, who turns out to be his daughter! Unable to sleep, she has gotten up for a bite to eat. She ends up the victim of her father's 'sincerity.' It takes more than 'sincerity' to make something true. Faith in a lie will always cause serious consequences. Faith in The Way, The Truth and The Life is never misplaced. Most of us have been taken to a wrong address while trusting in a misguided GPS system. Make sure that your eternal destination is correct and has been validated by the blood of Jesus!

In our study of The God Who Makes All things New, we now move to the next to the last book in the Bible, a letter so short that it consists of only one chapter. The letter which was not written to a specific church but to Jewish Christians and all believers everywhere is named for its author, Jude. In the first verse Jude identifies himself as the brother of James. The names of Jesus' physical half-brothers are listed in **Matthew 13:55 (ESV)** ⁵⁵ *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?* Jude is the English form of the name, Judas. Most believe that Jude was the half-brother of Jesus. The Apostle John reveals in **John 7:5 (ESV)** ⁵ *For not even his brothers believed in him.* It took the death and resurrection of Jesus for the other sons of Mary to understand that Jesus really was the Son of God.

David Legge uses a modern-day term to describe the folks that Jude wrote about. Legge calls them Creepers, that is men and women who creep their way into the church! They hide under the cloak of Christianity, but deep down in their souls they are godless! They follow church practices, they walk the walk outwardly, and talk the talk - but they had sneaked into the church, and were servants of Satan himself.

We should not be surprised that we have Creepers in the church today just like they did in New Testament times. Jude's explanation of how to handle the Creepers of his day remains relevant advice for us as well. The words from Jude will encourage us to stand firm in our faith.

Defending the faith against those who deny Christian morality.

Read Jude 1:3-4 (ESV) ³ *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.* ⁴ *For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

I can understand Jude's change of direction with his letter. I may write a lesson and soon realize the lesson needs a different direction. Jude said his first intention was to write concerning salvation. What believer wouldn't want to write about salvation? However, Jude was led by the Holy Spirit to change his topic and address the need for God's children to contend for our faith against ungodliness. The idea of contending for the faith might lead us to believe that we need to be eloquent speakers but that's not true. When we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we should be in step with Jesus and not the world. **Psalm 107:2 (ESV)** *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble .* We are never called to be hateful but need to be willing to speak out when we know wrong is wrong.

We do, however, need to be armed for spiritual warfare. If you don't know what that armor is, please read **Ephesians 6**. Dressed in His armor, we can bravely face *ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*. Pervert means to distort, misrepresent or lead astray. Grace is never meant to be twisted into a pretext for license to sin.

How could false brothers and sisters get into true assemblies of the saints? It happens when Christians go to sleep on the job. Jude was sounding the trumpet for Christian soldiers to wake up! The Creepers were among them – watering down and weakening the church of the Living God. The spiritual leaders in the churches had grown complacent and careless. 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 in our time are asleep on the job – allowing godless people to 'run the place'.

Why would the Creepers even want to be in the church? They like to use the Word of God to promote themselves and to defend their false doctrines. It may be politically correct or good business sense for them to be united with a local church but their preference is for the church to conform with the world. God's Word says in **Romans 12:2 (ESV)** ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Let's be clear, everyone is welcome to come to the family of God – to learn and to worship. However, only those who genuinely live out biblical principles should be leading in worship, teaching classes, singing in the choir, placed on committees, providing church security or whatever else needs to be done. This does not mean that we should exclude people from church service because of past sins. Any sin God has forgiven, is forgiven and forgotten. As God's children, we need His heart. Recall the words of Jesus to the woman taken in adultery in **John 8:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ ..., "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

The first test to discern a Creeper from a genuine Christian is to ask the question, “What do you think of Jesus Christ? Is He God come in the flesh?” But, it needs to go beyond that because most likely they learned to give the ‘church answer’. The real test of the Christian vs. the Creeper is to look at how they live.

Matthew 7:15-16 (ESV) ¹⁵ *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?”* Oswald Chambers wrote: “If I am going to know who Jesus is, I must obey Him.” We don’t know Jesus if we do not have the remotest intention of obeying Him.

The New Testament has a lot to say about ungodliness so I will just list one example: **Romans 13:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.*

Don’t be surprised by divisions caused by false teachers.

Read Jude 1:17-19 (ESV) ¹⁷ *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.*

From the beginning Satan has attacked God’s Word. **Genesis 3:1 (ESV)** *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”* Did God actually say is a question that echoes through the generations – different folks – same question designed by Satan himself to cause us to deny the authority of God’s Word. The Creepers want to divide and conquer the church for their purposes. They are willing to sacrifice true fellowship with God for the sake of the church approving ungodly passions.

Jude reminds believers that the apostles had predicted that there would be scoffers or apostates. An apostate is someone who falls away from the faith. Paul wrote of a good example in **2 Timothy 4:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...* When Jude spoke of the scoffers, he was actually echoing the words of Peter in **2 Peter 3:3 (ESV)** ³ *knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.* The last times or last days is a common phrase referring to the time between Jesus' first and second comings. We live in the last times.

Build yourself up and strengthen others in the faith.

Read Jude 1:20-25 (ESV) ²⁰ *But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. ²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

What do we as believers build our foundation of faith upon? We build on the entire Word of God. We cannot pick and chose the elements from the Bible that suit our needs – our opinions and still build a strong foundation in Christ. If we are not deeply rooted in the Word of God, how in the world could we recognize a Creeper? The faith we build upon is most holy because it comes to us from Almighty God. **1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,* ¹⁶ *since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

Wiersbe says, “The Word of God and prayer go together in spiritual growth. If all we do is read and study the Bible, we will have a great deal of light, but not much power. However, if we concentrate on prayer and ignore the Bible, we may be guilty of zeal without knowledge. We read the Word to grow in faith.” **Romans 10:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

What does praying in the Holy Spirit mean? It means to pray according to the **leading** of the Spirit. It has been said, ‘Prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven—it is getting God's will done on earth.’ **1 John 5:14-15 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ¹⁵ *And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

In these last days Jude tells us to keep ourselves in the love of God. Keep yourself in the sunshine of God's love. Let His love flood your heart and life. Jesus explained in **John 15:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

What does *waiting for the mercy of our Lord* mean? It means that we are to live life with the attitude of being motivated in all that we do by the promise of Christ’s return for us!

In trying to find common ground with those around us be careful not to fall into the pit of compromise. When reaching out to lift up others, we must be sure that our own footing is on solid ground. Be careful not to become so much like the world that no one can tell the difference. Influence others for Christ—don't allow them to influence you for the Devil.

I love the wording of verses 22-23: *And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.* The old hymn Rescue the Perishing is based on these verses. The hymn is a wonderful reminder of the need to defend our faith. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave... Rescue the perishing, duty demands it; Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide; Back to the narrow way patiently win them; Tell the poor wand'rer a Savior has died. Defend the faith. That what our Lord calls us to do!