

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 1 November 2020

Sermon Title : Fight for the Faith

Speaker : Rev Raymond Fong

Text : Jude 1:3, 17-23

INTRODUCTION

What would you fight for? Some of us would fight for things that are important to us such as health, possessions, family, friends and freedom. How about your faith – Will you fight for the faith? That is the question the Book of Jude asks of us.

Context

Scholars have identified Jude as the half-brother of Jesus and the brother of James (Jude 1:1). Like James, Jude (a short form of Judas) did not place his faith in Jesus when Jesus was alive but only when Jesus had died and is risen again.

Jude is written to expose the false teachings that had crept into the community and Jude calls for people to stand firm and fight for the faith. Jude challenges us to *“contend for the faith that was once entrusted to God’s holy people.”* (v.3)
“Contend” (*Gk - agonizomai*) – to “fight strenuously to defend the faith” (Amplified Bible)

Jude reminds us that if we do not fight for what is true faith, we will lose it, and Paul echoes this in 1 Timothy 6:12.

False Teaching:

1. Using the grace of God as a license for immorality (v.4a) – justify a sin-filled and immoral life in the name of the grace of God.
2. Denying the sovereignty of Jesus Christ (v.4b, 8, 12)

Jude strongly condemns the false teachers as “grumblers, faultfinders, following their own sinful desires, loud-mouthed boasters” (v.16), and “scoffers, worldly people devoid of the Spirit” (v.18-19). Jude declares God’s harsh judgment upon these ungodly false teachers. (v.14-15)

3 Half-truths that permeate into the Church

Half-truths have subtly crept into the Church because of repeated emphasis on only a certain aspect of faith, typically the goodness of God, without presenting holistically a balanced view of what we need to respond to the goodness of God.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

- a. **(just) Pardoning Grace and not Sanctified Holiness:** Just emphasising on God's pardoning grace and neglects holiness which flows from a reverend fear of the Lord. In actual fact:
- We are also commanded to sanctified holiness – to pursue a life set apart for God.
 - We should not take advantage of God's grace, kindness and mercy which is to repeatedly forgive us, but pursue intentional discipleship to strive not to fall.

"Grace without discipleship is cheap grace." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) Costly grace comes with our intentional discipleship to follow Jesus. Intentional is important as it means being ruthless with sin as God wants us to be, so we can make lifestyle choices that will change our ways which hinder our relationship with God (Hebrews 12:28-29), setting ourselves apart with our body as a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1)

- b. **(just) Prosperity and not Charity:** Me-focused prosperity instead of others-centred charity. Faith that focuses on God always blessing us for our own wellbeing and so God is treated like a vending machine, to protect and grant us victory in every circumstance, where we name and claim and we almost demand it as a guaranteed outcome. Though Scripture promises spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ, it also tells us that as a disciple:
- There will be sufferings and trials without expected victories.
 - There will be deep wrestling with our sin, failings and struggles in life.

God's blessing is not that we will be taken away from these sufferings and trials but that He is with us in and through our trials and struggles. (John 16:33) Because Jesus Christ is in us and with us we experience His power and blessings through the trials in our lives. God blesses us in our trials so that we can be a blessing to others. (Micah 6:8) It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Do not be misled by the half-truth that our relationship with God is primarily about receiving God's blessings; it is primarily for us to be His blessing to others.

- c. **(just) the Gifts and not the Fruit:** Faith that emphasises the pursuit of gifts for ministry more than the fruit of character has subtly crept into the modern church today because there are many teachings that emphasize on the effectiveness of the church, leadership skills, leadership organisation, ministry competencies with the pre-occupation to make programmes, instead of making disciples. Our obsession is with outcome defined in figures and progression, instead of focusing on lives transformed. When the overarching focus is on the right talent and gifts to get the job done, it will be done at the expense of character building and spiritual formation. This is the kind of faith that build on the belief that as long as you are very gifted for ministry, you are close to God. But this is not true. The true measure of our spiritual success is:

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

- How fruitful we are – producing the fruit of the Spirit

There are many scandals with pastors and leaders who are so gifted yet lack in character because it is not what you do with your gift in public that matters. It is who you are in secret, the fruit of your private secret life that determines who you really are; it is that purity of heart in the depth of your character and your integrity that show your true faith.

How to fight for the faith? (vv.20-23)

We are living in times that we will not endure sound doctrines, but we will only hear what our ears like to hear to satisfy our own desires. (2 Tim 4:3) Let us press on to contend and fight for the true faith:

(i) Keep the Faith (v.21):

- Abide in God who is love for it is only when we abide in Christ that we bear the fruit of our intentional discipleship, our intentional relationship with God. When we abide in God, we find the ability to be set apart for God, to be holy because holiness is the grace empowered response to the love of God.
- To wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life (the 2nd coming of Christ). It is only in Christ that our true salvation is found, so we are to put our hope in His return. In our sufferings and trials, we produce perseverance which leads to character, and character leads to this hope that does not disappoint. (Romans 5:3-2)

(ii) Build the Faith (v.20): - In Greek, it is the idea of building a structure on a foundation and not building from scratch. The foundation must be a true faith in Christ and we must build on it to contend for it.

- Jude calls us to pray in the Holy Spirit who secures our identity that leads us to true unity, grants us wisdom, insights and revelation into the very heart and things of God so our faith can be built up.

One good way to build our faith is through community and that is why we are a church of small groups. We believe in discipleship through community. In a small group, there is mutual encouragement in the study and application of God's word. There will be mutual building up as we seek the Holy Spirit together as a small group in these challenging times.

Be part of a small group or join one if you have not. If you are already in a small group, consider getting deeper into each other's lives by being accountable to one another. It is through spiritual accountability that character is forged where we will no longer focus on things we see on the external. Through spiritual accountability, we

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

hold each other accountable for what is going on inside and are continually formed in the likeness of Christ.

- (iii) Share the Faith! (v.23): In the context of Jude, it probably refers to sharing faith with people who are misled by false teachings.
- The fire of eternal judgement awaits anyone who does not know Jesus Christ. We need to seize the urgency of our times to go out to share the faith.

We are all born evangelists of things we like and are passionate about. As we have tasted the goodness of Christ, let us be evangelists to share that amazing faith we have in Him. (1 Peter 3:15)

The generosity we have and kindness that we show will lead and point others to Jesus Christ. It is only when we share our faith that we will move away from a “Me-centred” prosperity to an “Others-centred” charity, because when we take that step of faith to share, we will have the welfare and interest of others at heart. Covid-19 is a sombre reminder that we are in the last days with more than one million deaths in the world. The fear and sorrow in watching a neighbour or loved one pass away remind us of the urgency to share the faith and hope we have in Jesus with others.

CONCLUSION

Let us respond to God’s word so we can be counted on to share the faith we have in Jesus with others. Let us be mindful of the half-truths that have permeated into the Church so we may never take advantage of God’s grace but contend for the true faith we have by keeping the faith, building the faith and sharing the faith with others.

Through the “12 days to Christmas” outreach this year, let us cultivate a culture of outreach starting with our small groups, to snatch one more out of the fire for Christ Jesus.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Jude 1:3, 17-23 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

- a.
 - (i) As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?
 - (ii) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Fight for the Faith"?

- b. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. Why are half-truths not able to lead us to true faith in Christ Jesus?
- 2b. How does knowing that 3 half-truths (or more) have crept into the Church today impact how you would seek to know God's truth?
- 2c.
 - (i) Which of the 3 half-truths do you find subtly influencing your faith?
 - (ii) What is one thing you can do to contend with this influence and fight for the true faith?
- 3a. Is your discipleship to follow Jesus Christ intentional?
- 3b.
 - (i) Is there mutual encouragement, building up of faith and accountability in your small group?
 - (ii) What is one thing your group can do to improve mutual encouragement, building up of faith and accountability?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you embark on an intentional discipleship journey if you have not started on it yet?

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how by God's grace you were able to go out of your comfort zone to "Keep the faith" or "Build the Faith" or "Share the faith" despite your personal preference to only hear what your ears like to hear to satisfy your own desires.

OR

Give thanks to the Holy Spirit for helping you to persevere in your trial to build your character which leads to hope in Christ Jesus, which you can share with others.

5. As a group, seek the Lord's direction on how you can cultivate a culture of outreach starting with this "12 Days to Christmas", so you can snatch one more out of the fire for Jesus.

Bring all that have been shared in 2c and 3a, 3b and 3c to God, asking for His Holy Spirit to help you abide in Christ so as to be filled with His grace to respond to His love and fight for the faith by committing to do all that have been shared, in the following week(s) until your next meeting.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7