

The Fight of a Man's Life:

3 Warnings and Strategies from Jude

I am excited to deliver a message today which is primarily aimed at men but also applicable to all of us. I want to discuss the significant battles that men face in their lives. Throughout the scriptures, we encounter various battles, some of which unwise while others were divinely ordained. These battles involved both individuals and nations.

Biblical Battles

From the very beginning, we witness the first physical altercation between Cain and Abel, followed by Jacob's sons mistreating their younger brother Joseph, throwing him in a pit, and eventually selling him to merchants.

We also see divine battles fought by Israel against multiple nations, including the climactic fight where the Lord delivered them from Egypt and slavery. The Book of Judges highlights individuals like Samson, a superhuman figure with divine strength as long as his hair remained uncut. We witness him toppling entire pillars in his final act to fulfill God's judgment. Deborah, a woman, led Israel to victory in battle, and King Saul, although flawed in following God's instructions, led the nation in bringing about judgment. And who can forget David, a young boy who defeated the giant Goliath with a small stone and then triumphantly severed his head with Goliath's own sword?

Moving on, I want to draw attention to David's 30 Mighty Men, some of whom vanquished hundreds of enemies simultaneously. One account speaks of a warrior who held onto his sword and single-handedly killed three to five hundred men. Since I have struggled against my backyard leaves, this battle surpasses anything I've experienced. These stories illustrate the recurring theme of battles fought throughout history.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced a battle against godless leaders and were thrown into a fiery furnace. However, God intervened and saved them, fighting the battle on their behalf. Similarly, Peter fought at the Mount of Olives when Jesus was arrested, cutting off a servant's ear, only to have Jesus heal it and admonish them against violence.

But the greatest battle of all occurred on the cross of Calvary, where Jesus bore our punishment and pain. A few years ago, during my trip to Africa, specifically Tanzania, I brought back Maasai clubs as gifts for my sons. These clubs, with a large ball at the end, are known as "skull crushers" and are designed for young men. They can penetrate even animal skulls when swung correctly. However, despite their novelty, they are irrelevant to today's battle.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are engaged in a war. This battle does not require physical weapons like swords or guns, but we fight it in the realm of the soul. It is a battle for our nation, children, and grandchildren's souls. It is a battle between light and darkness, between the Kingdom of God and the demonic forces seeking to steal, kill, and destroy.

Make no mistake; this battle is real. Today, I call upon the men here to stand up and fight. This call leads us to a lesser-known book in the New Testament, the Book of Jude. Surprisingly, despite my 28 years of ministry, I have never preached an entire sermon on this book. Jude, the author, is the younger brother of James and Jesus, which adds a unique perspective to his writings. It's remarkable that his own brothers, who grew up with him, eventually believed in his divine identity. I find that aspect intriguing, having grown up with brothers myself.

Imagine trying to convince your siblings that you're the Messiah, the king of kings, and the Lord of Lords. It probably wouldn't have gone well. But eventually, even Jesus' brothers came to believe in him, especially after his resurrection.

So, let's turn to Jude chapter one. The author, writing to believers, urges them to fight for their faith, contending earnestly for it. He warns about specific individuals who have infiltrated their community and turned the grace of God into an excuse for immoral behavior. These ungodly people deny the authority of the Lord and Jesus Christ.

I want to focus on verse three, where the author emphasizes the fight of a man's life, urging believers to fight for their faith.

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

He then proceeded to provide warnings and relevant examples to the original audience. These examples also hold significance for us today.

Beware of Unbelief

The first warning relates to the Israelites who were delivered from Egypt but later faced God's judgment due to their lack of belief and rebellion. It teaches us not to take our salvation for granted and emphasizes the need to remain faithful.

But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 5)

The destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness shows that none ought to presume the privileges of salvation. God had delivered them. They experienced the great redemption of God yet still came under his judgment when they refused to believe.

Scripture continually talks about working out your salvation with fear and trembling. Some people want to say, Well, praise God, I've got my ticket clicked in for heaven, and I'm on the way. I don't need to do anything else. And while I believe in the security that the blood of Jesus provides, I also know that my heart can wander, and there is a slippery slope. How far does the grace of God go? I don't know, and I don't plan to find out. That I know that without holiness, no one will see God. Unbelief can corrupt our souls and our spirits.

Submit to Authority

The second warning concerns the fallen angels who rebelled against God's authority. This warning cautions us about the corruption and disregard for authority that we often see in our society today, whether in politics, religion, or even within families. We all struggle with this aspect of human nature, known as the flesh.

During the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, my family and I attended my daughter's lacrosse game in Delaware. We were grateful to be out and about, but tensions were high regarding mask-wearing.

On that scorching day, with temperatures reaching 105 degrees, no trees were around, and we were sweating profusely under the blazing sun. The field where she played had turf, making it even hotter. Since no one was within 20 to 30 yards of us, and because I valued breathing, I decided to lower my mask, thinking it would be fine since we were outdoors. However, within five minutes, a young lady, likely hired to enforce the mask policy, approached us politely and asked us to pull our masks up.

I felt a surge of frustration and the inclination to argue with her. But in that moment, I sensed the Holy Spirit telling me to remain silent. Internally, I started my argument with the Lord, using the word "but." Yet, I heard His instruction again, telling me to shut up. So, despite feeling justified in my stance, I thanked the young lady and raised my mask back up.

Although I wasn't the authority figure there, it was a lesson in knowing my place and submitting to authority. I confess I sulked a bit, feeling frustrated, but the Lord reminded me again to walk in submission.

The issue of authority is significant. We see a parallel in the rebellion of angels who rejected God's sovereignty and were subsequently cast out of heaven. Scripture warns us about the consequences of rebellion and stubbornness, equating them to witchcraft and idolatry. As men of God, we must guard our hearts and respectfully approach authority.

Shun Immorality

The third warning Jude provides is about immorality, using the example of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This reminder is a loud warning to abstain from fleshly lusts that wage war against our souls. We live in a society where we often avoid addressing sexual sin to avoid offending anyone. However, it's vital to acknowledge sin as sin. Scripture clearly states that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God, listing various forms of sexual immorality. Nevertheless, there is hope through the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, as Paul reminded the Church in Corinth.

Fortunately, Jude doesn't leave us with only warnings but also provides strategies for our fight. In verses 20-23, he instructs believers to build themselves up in faith, pray in the Spirit, remain in the love of God, and show compassion while distinguishing between those who need saving and those who

require stern correction. These strategies involve strengthening one another through sound doctrine, prayer, and displaying love and compassion.

Build One Another Up

We not only need to uplift one another with biblical truth, but we also need to encourage each other. Encouragement is like a breath of fresh air for the soul. We all need encouragement, and being part of a church family that uplifts one another is truly rewarding. Let's lead by example and be people who refresh others, knowing that we will also be refreshed.

Furthermore, Jude emphasizes the importance of praying in the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit's baptism is a source of encouragement for our souls. When we pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, even if our minds may not fully comprehend, the Spirit speaks through us. This type of prayer impacts the spiritual realm and breaks the fallow ground within our hearts. Personally, I find solace in praying in the Holy Spirit, whether I'm driving or engaging in other activities. It's not reserved for Sunday mornings only; it's a gift that enriches our daily walk with the Lord. Praying in the Spirit is one way we build ourselves up and build one another up.

Keep Yourself in the Love of the Lord

Next, Jude urged us to keep ourselves in the love of the Lord Jesus. Love is at the core of the Gospel. Scripture emphasizes the command to love one another because love comes from God, and God Himself is love. Keeping ourselves in love means avoiding division, which arises when we place ourselves in judgment or authority over others. By allowing love to guide our hearts, relationships, and words, we submit to the authority of love and prevent division from taking root. Whether in our homes, workplaces, or anywhere else, love should govern our thoughts, words, and actions. When we step out of love, complaints and divisions tend to arise. Therefore, it is vital to keep ourselves rooted in love.

The phrase "keep yourself in love" is intentional because no one can make us love others. It is our responsibility. I recall a story about my grown sons when they were younger. They argued, and my wife told them to hug and make up. It was a comical yet heartfelt moment as they reluctantly embraced.

Similarly, no one can force us to walk in love. We must monitor ourselves, listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and assess whether we are genuinely leading with love. Some aspects of Scripture may take a lifetime to understand and apply fully. There will be times when we excel in demonstrating love and others when we struggle and make excuses. But it's crucial to keep ourselves in the love of Christ, continually checking our motives and actions.

Show Compassion to the Sinner, Not the Sin

Finally, Jude emphasizes the importance of building each other up and keeping ourselves in love. He uses the phrase "love the sinner, hate the sin" to explain the concept. This passage discusses showing compassion to individuals while not endorsing their sinful behaviors.

Let me share a story to illustrate this point. There was a lady who started attending our church in Philadelphia. She had been involved in various lifestyles, including witchcraft, in the past. Although she had experienced a transformation through salvation, her life still needed time to align with the teachings of Jesus. She joined a Bible study group led by one of our deacons. The deacon approached me and shared the lady's background, but he asked if she could continue attending the study so that we could show her love and support as she grew. I agreed, recognizing the importance of demonstrating Jesus' love without passing harsh judgment. We taught her the truth of God's Word while allowing the Holy Spirit to work in her heart.

Over the next three years, her life gradually aligned with the Gospel. She left ungodly relationships and lifestyles and remained faithful to the Word of God. Our church leaders provided practical support throughout the process, helping her find a new place to live and assisting financially when needed. They genuinely cared about her holistic well-being, not just her beliefs. Today, she continues to serve the Lord faithfully. This story reminds us that sometimes we must love people where they are while challenging them with God's truth. We shouldn't condone sin, but we can show compassion to sinners. It's a delicate balance of love and truth.

Now, I want to specifically address the men here today, although this message applies to all of us. Men, I urge you to be the kind of men who uplift and encourage one another. Kindness and tenderness don't diminish your masculinity. Keep yourselves rooted in love, and let strength and love coexist

within you. Let's all show compassion and strength through gentleness and determination.

When I was young, I used to play the game of tag with friends. It was always a great feeling when someone tagged you, even though the goal was not to be tagged. It's a strange paradox.

Today, I want to invite all the men, whether fathers or not, to come forward and be tagged for the battle of our lives. We will pray for you as you join the Army of God in this fight. Then, we will turn and pray for the rest of us gathered here because we will fight with love, compassion, and the truth of God's Word in our battle. We will fight according to God's ways.