

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Part 1

by Erik Olsen

--INTRO:

--Jude 3-4: "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. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

--**CONTEND:** To strive in opposition or against difficulties; struggle: *armies contending for control of strategic territory;*

--the essence of our faith... in our study of the roots of salvation we began with a picture of separation between man and God and how we can't live in God's presence without our sins being covered:

--**contrast** in Hebrews passage comparing separation at Mt. Sinai to reconciliation in heaven...

-- Hebrews 12:18-24: "For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.' But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant..."

-- those who stand before God on judgement day without their sins being covered will be sent to the lake of fire of which the terror on Mt. Sinai was merely a faint glimpse...

-- Ephesians 2:19-20: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone..."

--**essence of the gospel:** sins covered through shed blood of Christ / reconciled to God

-- Colossians 1:21-22: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...**"

--the laborious ceremony of the Old Covenant has been replaced by **a simple step of faith...** trusting in Christ to make us "holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight..." / trusting in Him to pay the full debt of our sins (through His death.. and resurrection...)

--**countless sacrifices limited by time and space replaced by final sacrifice that transcends time and space- that is, God left eternity and died in a moment of time to save us from death in eternity / He died in our place... (refer to Christmas booklet)**

--Hebrews 4:16: "**Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace** that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

--like the Philistines stole the Ark of the Covenant from Israel, so false teachers steal the power of Christ's final sacrifice by teaching lies...

--**ex: Catholicism...**

-- in addition to Christ you need earthly priests...

-- in addition to Christ's sacrifice you have to perform good works in order to be "holy, blameless, and above reproach" in the sight of God

--the Word of God is the "Sword of the Spirit" – a spiritual weapon for combating the lies of false teachers

--**scripture is undergirded by over 2000 prophecies**

--Ephesians 6:10-17: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 **Put on the full armor of God** so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**"

--Hebrews 4:12: "For whatever God says to us is full of living power: it is sharper than the sharpest dagger, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are." ("The Living Bible" translation)

--1 Corinthians 2:4-5 "[the apostle Paul wrote] my speech and my preaching were **not with persuasive words of human wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

--1 Corinthians 1:18: "**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**" (see also 1 Corinthians 21-25)

--2 Timothy 3:16-17: "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

--2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "**For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God** for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

-6 steps to gain a solid grasp of God's Word – the "Sword of the Spirit..."

1. LISTEN to the Word

--related to scripture below

2. READ the Word

--related to scripture below

3. STUDY the Word

--2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (kjv)

--Acts 17:11: "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

4. MEMORIZE the Word

--Colossians 3:15-17: "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

--Psalms 119:11: "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

5. PRAYERFULLY MEDITATE on the Word

--Psalms 119:15: "**I will meditate** on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways."

--Joshua 1:8: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but **you shall meditate in it day and night**, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

--different truth to meditate on in the New Testament... "But now **the righteousness of God apart from the law** is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe." (Romans 3:21-22)

-- Colossians 1:21-22: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...**"

--Colossians 3:1-2: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

--1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "**Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing**, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

--Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — **meditate on these things.**"

6. FOLLOW the Word

--Philippians 4:9 (*continued from Philippians verse at step 5*) "...The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, **these do**, and the God of peace will be with you."

--James 1:22-23: "**But be doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves..."

--Hebrews 5:13-14: "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who **by reason of use have their senses exercised** to discern both good and evil."

--**on a deeper level, all six points are rooted in the Great Commandment:** "love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37)