

THIS IS WAR, AND WE MUST FIGHT!

I want to call your attention to a command in the Bible that calls upon Christians to do something that many Christians really do not want to do.

- a. In fact, what this Bible passage calls upon Christians to do is admittedly *difficult* for most of us, and *opposite* to what many Christians want to do.
- b. I'm talking about a Bible passage that commands Christians to be *militant* in defending the faith and opposing error.

Turn with me in your Bible to the book of Jude, and look with me at verses 3 and 4.

- a. Jude 3 – “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.”
 - ▶ The Bible in Basic English (1964) translates it this way: “... go on fighting strongly for the faith which has been given to the saints once and for ever.”
- b. “contend” is *epagonizomai* (*epi* + *agonizomai*)
 - ▶ *agonizomai* according to Thayer means:
 - ∞ 1) to enter a contest: contend in the gymnastic games
 - ∞ **2) to contend with adversaries, fight** (Jn 18:36; 1Tim 6:12; 2Tim 4:7)
 - It is obvious from the context that this is the meaning of the word in this passage
 - ∞ 3) metaph. to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers
 - ∞ 4) to endeavour with strenuous zeal, strive: to obtain something
 - ▶ *epi* is an intensive prefix that gives *epagonizomai* the meaning “contend earnestly” or “fight strongly”

Please notice: Jude had intended to write to the brethren about “our common salvation” but he found it necessary to write to them urging them to “contend earnestly for the faith” – because ungodly men and false teachers had “crept in” amongst the brethren and they were having influence.

- a. His admonition was very much needed by the churches then – and it is very much needed by the churches now.
- b. The reality is this: Every Christian is to be a soldier in the Lord’s army, and there is no place in the Lord’s army for the pacifist or the conscientious objector – every Christian must “contend earnestly for the faith” and “fight the good fight” (2Tim 4:7).
- c. Every Christian is to “put on the whole armor of God” and wield “the sword of the Spirit” in defense of the truth and in opposition to error.
 - ▶ Eph 6:13-17 -- “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; . . .”

I believe many of us within churches of Christ of the 21st century have lost sight of this – many of us have lost our militancy – many of us have become passive.

- a. When the truths of the gospel are being contradicted, misrepresented, and perverted ... many Christians sit passively by and say nothing! Or weakly offer some “insights”.
 - ▶ Brethren, that won’t do.
- b. When members within the church are known to be involved in sin it is too often the case

that the sin is ignored and nothing done about it.

- ▶ Brethren, that won't do.

THIS IS WAR!!! AND WE ARE SOLDIERS IN A SPIRITUAL ARMY!!! AND WE MUST FIGHT!!!

1Tim 6:12 – “**Fight** the good **fight** of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called ...”

1Tim 1:18 – “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good **warfare**,”

- NASB: “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight,”

2Tim 2:3,4 – “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in **warfare** entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”

2Cor 10:4 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not **war** according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our **warfare** are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,”

THE APOSTLE JOHN GIVES US A DRAMATIC PICTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE THE ARMIES OF THE LORD ARE FIGHTING

Rev 19:11-21 – “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He **judges** and **makes war**. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the **armies** in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a **sharp sword**, that with it He should **strike** the nations. And He Himself will **rule them with a rod of iron**. He Himself treads the winepress of the **fierceness** and **wrath** of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may **eat the flesh** of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’ 19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their **armies**, gathered together to make **war** against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were **killed with the sword** which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

CHRISTIANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD, AND WILL ALWAYS BE IN CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD – AND WE MUST BE STRONG, COURAGEOUS, AND BOLD!

WE MUST BE MILITANT! WE CANNOT BE PASSIVE!!!

1. WE CANNOT BE PASSIVE IN DEALING WITH SIN IN THE LIVES OF MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

We must **confront** those involved in sin.

2Tim 4:2 -- “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. **Convince, rebuke, exhort,** with all longsuffering and teaching.”

Eph 5:11 -- “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **expose** them.”

Matt 18:16-17 -- “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and **tell him his fault** between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, **take with you one or two more**, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he refuses to hear them, **tell it to the church**. But if he refuses even to hear the church, **let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector**.”

Jude 22,23 -- “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

- a. “pulling” is *harpazo*
 - ▶ *harpazo* according to Thayer means:
 - ∞ to seize, to carry off by force
 - ∞ to seize on, to claim for one's self eagerly
 - ∞ to snatch out or away
 - ▶ NASB: “And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, **snatching** them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”
 - ▶ NIV: “ Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 **snatch** others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”
 - ▶ JBP: “There are some whom you must pity because of their doubts; 23 some you must save by **snatching** them out of the fire. But there are others whom you must pity with the utmost caution, hating the very clothes which their deeds have soiled.”
- b. This reminds me of the way Nehemiah dealt with the men of Israel who had married pagan women in violation of God’s law: “So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?” (Neh 13:25,26)

Someone says, “But what if the sinning brother won’t repent?”

2Th 3:6-15 -- “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you **withdraw** from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. ... 14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and **do not keep company** with him, that he may be **ashamed**. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but **admonish** him as a brother.”

2. WE CANNOT BE PASSIVE IN DEALING WITH OUR OWN SINS.

1Cor 9:27 -- “But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

- a. NASB: “ but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”
- b. NIV: “No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Matt 5:29,30 -- “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

- a. We need to cut ourselves off from friendships and companionships that encourage us to sin.
- b. We need to quit a job or a career that requires us to compromise our convictions ... or that leaves us little time for our family or the Lord’s work.
- c. If we find that we’re living in Sodom and Gomorrah, we’ve got to get out of there and go somewhere else.
- d. Simply put: We must eliminate the things in our life that are dragging us down spiritually and the things that are hindering us from doing what we ought to do for the Lord.
 - ▶ 2Tim 2:4 – “No one engaged in warfare **entangles** himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”

3. WE CANNOT BE PASSIVE IN DEALING WITH FALSE TEACHING BY THOSE WITHIN THE CHURCH

Rom 16:17-18 – “Now I urge you, brethren, **note** those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and **avoid** them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”

1Tim 6:3-5 -- “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such **withdraw** yourself.”

Tit 1:7-14 – “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, ... 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to **exhort** and **convict** those who contradict. 10 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 whose **mouths must be stopped**, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. 12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ 13 This testimony is true. Therefore **rebuke them sharply**, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.”

Tit 3:10 – “**Reject** a divisive man after the first and second admonition,”

- a. ASV: “A factious man after a first and second admonition **refuse**;”
- b. NIV: “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, **have nothing to do with him.**”

Example: Ac 15:1-2 – “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ 2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small **dissension** and **dispute** with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

“no small dissension and dispute” is a litotes and means great dissension and dispute – just as in Ac 27:20, “no small tempest” (NKJV) means a *raging* storm (NIV)

Example: Gal 2:11-14 – “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I **withstood him to his face**, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not

straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”

4. WE CANNOT BE PASSIVE IN DEALING WITH FALSE TEACHING BY THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

2Cor 10:3-5 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 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,”

Eph 6:10-13 – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole **armor** of God, that you may be able to **stand against** the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not **wrestle** against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole **armor** of God, that you may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**.”

WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED THAT THE LORD COMMANDS CHRISTIANS TO BE *MILITANT* IN DEFENDING THE FAITH AND OPPOSING ERROR – AFTER ALL, JESUS WAS *MILITANT* ... AND JESUS IS *MILITANT*

Jesus was militant in His confrontation with the moneychangers:

- a. Jn 2:13-17 – “Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’ 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’”

Jesus was militant in His confrontations with the scribe Pharisees:

- a. Matt 23:13-16 – “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. 15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. 16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’”

Jesus was militant in His rebuke and warnings to the Seven Churches of Asia:

- a. To the church at Ephesus:
 - ▶ “... repent ... or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent” (Rev 2:5)
- b. To the church at Smyrna:
 - ▶ Jesus identifies Himself as “He who has the sharp two-edged sword” (2:12), and He threatens, “I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth” (2:16)
- c. To the church at Thyatira:
 - ▶ “Indeed I will cast her (that wicked woman, Jezebel) into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your

- works" (2:22,23)
- d. To the church at Sardis:
 - ▶ If you don't repent, "I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (3:3).
- e. To the church at Laodicea:
 - ▶ He reminded them that He rebukes and chastens those whom He loves (3:19) ... and He threatened to vomit them out of His mouth if they didn't repent (3:16).

Conclusion

Arnold Toynbee: "History teaches us that when a barbarian race (confronts a sleeping culture, the barbarian always wins."

- a. That's a warning the Lord's church of the 21st century needs to take heed to: "History teaches us that when a barbarian race (make that: unbelievers, scoffers, and false religionists) confronts a sleeping culture (make that: the church in the 21st century), the barbarian always wins."

Isaiah was moved to cry out in alarm to the Lord's people of his day: "Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion" – and that's the cry that needs to go out to the Lord's people today.

- a. We must wake up to the reality that we are at war ... and will always be at war in this world.
- b. We must "contend earnestly for the faith".
- c. We must "fight the good fight of faith".

We must be militant – but we must not be mean.

- a. We can contend and confront and oppose without being mean or unkind or abrasive or condescending.
 - ▶ And we can reprove, rebuke and exhort without being mean or unkind or abrasive or condescending.
- b. Our first approach to the brother involved in sin ought to be with gentleness, and our every approach ought to be with humility.
 - ∞ Gal 6:1 -- "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."
 - ▶ And our first approach to those who teach falsely ought to be with gentleness, and our every approach with humility.
 - ∞ 2Tim 2:24-25 -- "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be **gentle** to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in **humility** correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,"

The last thing I want to say is this: For soldiers in the Lord's army who "contend earnestly for the faith" and "fight the good fight of faith" the reward is great – the greatest possible reward – "the crown of righteousness" given by the Lord Himself.

- a. 2Tm 4:7,8 – "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."