

Contending for the Fullness of God's Power

I. CONTENDING FOR GOD'S HIGHEST

³ *I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend (fight) earnestly for the faith which was once for all (originally) delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)*

- A. **Definition**: to contend means to fight for something while striving against the difficulties that hinder its release. We have a vision to walk in everything that God will give the human spirit in this generation with a holy pain concerning our powerlessness and spiritual barrenness (Mt. 5:4).
- B. The apostle Jude exhorted the believers under his leadership to fight earnestly to walk in the faith or in the quality of life in the Spirit that was originally given to the saints by the first apostles.
1. We contend for New Testament **doctrine** as we resist the increasing error of liberalism.
 2. We contend for New Testament **lifestyles** including purity, prayer and fasting, (Mt. 5-7).
 3. We contend for New Testament **power** in our life. In other words, we are to contend for a breakthrough of the ***fullness*** of God's power.
- C. Contending to walk in NT doctrine, lifestyle and power includes 5 components:
1. We must first have a ***clear vision*** for the breakthrough of God's power.
 2. We must commit to ***actively seek*** the breakthrough of power through ***fasting and prayer***.
 3. We walk in the tension of being ***faithful and grateful*** in the days of small beginnings.
 4. We seek to ***fully obey God*** without any compromise (Mt. 5-7).
 5. We must ***bear the reproach*** that comes to those who seek to walk in God's power.
God protects His people (that He anoints with great power) with problems (2 Cor. 12:7-9).
- D. We must contend for more because the Christian life is a "cooperation" with God's grace. **God will not do our part** and **we cannot do His part**. If we do not do our part then God withholds some of the blessing He would have given us. Some "trust" the sovereignty of God in a non-biblical way by "trusting" God to do what He has assigned to us. This is negligence and presumption. God has given us a dynamic role in determining some of the measure of the "quality of life" that we experience in the natural and in the Spirit. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but **only** if His people rise up to ask for them (Isa 30:18-19; Ezek. 22:30).

² *You do not have because you do not ask. (Jas 4:2)*

- E. The Church in the West is similar in attitude and spiritual superficiality to the Laodicean Church.
- ¹⁶ *Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich and white garments, that you may be clothed...and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:16-19)*

II. WE MUST HAVE A VISION FOR THE BREAKTHROUGH OF GOD'S FULLNESS

²⁴ ***Take heed what you hear (believe about what God will give you). With the same measure you use (apply), it will be measured to you (by God); and to you who hear, more will be given. (Mk. 4:24)***

A. Take heed (be careful) in what you hear or in what you believe is God's measure of blessing for your life. Be careful in determining what you will contend for in your experience in God. Feed your spirit on examples of scriptural promises of a great release of power in the future.

¹² ***Most assuredly, I (Jesus) say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (Jn. 14:12)***

¹⁷ ***It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. 18 On My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days...19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (Acts 2:17-20)***

¹⁵ ***As in the days when you came out of...Egypt, I will show them wonders. (Mic. 7:15)***

B. ***The greatest revival*** in history is coming that will result in the Church being full of God's glory (Eph. 5:26-27; 3:19; 4:13; Mt. 16:18; 22:37; Rev. 7:9; 12:11; 15:2; 19:7-8; 22:17). It will include miracles seen in the Book Acts and the Book of Exodus that will be combined and multiplied on a global scale (Joel 2:28-32). ***The Great Ingathering of souls*** is probably over 1 billion (Mt. 24:14; Rev. 5:9; 7:9, 14; 14:6). ***The spirit of prophecy*** will rest on every believer (Acts 2:17; Jer. 31:9; 23:8-20; Dan. 11:33-35; Isa. 26:9; Rev. 11:3-6; 18:20; Mt. 17:11; Mal. 4:6; Jn. 14:12).

⁹ ***Behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations...standing before the Throne...14 These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation. (Rev. 7:9, 14)***

C. Feed your spirit on examples of God's power in the lives of the first apostles (Acts 2:1-4, 37-47; 3:4-10; 4:31-37; 5:5-20; 6:8, 10, 15; 7:54-60; 8:4-8, 17, 23-24, 26, 29, 39; 9:3-9, 17-18, 31-42; 10:3-4, 10-11, 30-31, 44-46; 11:5-18, 26, 28; 12:7-10, 23-24; 13:2, 11, 52; 14:3; 8-10; 16:9, 18, 26; 18:9-10; 19:6, 11-20; 20:9-10; 22:6-13; 23:11; 26:13-18; 27:23-24; 28:3-6).

¹¹ ***God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits...14 There were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 The evil spirit said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known to all...in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of Jesus was magnified. 18 Many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds...20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. (Acts 19:11-20)***

- D. Feed your spirit on the examples of those throughout Church history who functioned mightily in God's power. It is important to study the history of revivals to stir up your faith. Some prominent examples of people who the Holy Spirit anointed with unusual power in preaching and releasing revival: Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), David Brainerd (1718-1747), John Wesley (1703-1791), George Whitefield (1714-1770), Charles Finney (1792-1875), D. L. Moody (1837-1899). Some prominent examples of people who have functioned in God's miracle power in recent history are John G. Lake (1870-1935), Marie Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924), John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947), William Branham (1909-1965). I recommend the book All Things Are Possible by David Harrell, Jr.
- E. Howard Pittman's testimony: the Church will operate in the spirit of Elijah (John the Baptist).
¹³ ***The angel said, "...16 he (John) will turn many...to the Lord. 17 He will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*** (Lk. 1:13-18)
- F. First we seek God's face then we earnestly seek His hand (power). We are to seek the spiritual gifts by praying for them, making room for them and then by using them.
³¹ ***Earnestly desire the best gifts.*** ^{14:1} ***Desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.*** ³⁹ ***Desire earnestly to prophesy...*** (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39)

III. WE CONTEND FOR GOD'S FULLNESS WITH A LIFESTYLE OF FASTING AND PRAYER

- ¹⁵ ***"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely... I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."*** ¹⁸ ***Jesus rebuked the demon...and the child was cured.*** ¹⁹ ***The disciples...said, "Why could we not cast him out?"*** ²⁰ ***So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief...21 however, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."*** (Mt. 17:15-21)
- A. Determine that you will pay any price to see the breakthrough of God in your life and city. Refuse to back down. Settle the issue that you will embrace a lifestyle of spiritual violence which is God's prescribed way to release the great things of the Kingdom. Ask God, "Why not me?" If not you, then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?
¹² ***From the days of John the Baptist...the kingdom of heaven suffers (permits/rewards) violence, and the violent (those with holy resolution to fast/pray) take it by force.*** (Mt. 11:12)
- B. Jesus taught that prayer with fasting was to be a regular part of a believer's life. We do not earn God's blessings by it but recognize it is God's way to position our heart to cooperate with Him.
¹⁷ ***When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*** (Mt. 6:17-18)
- C. God opens doors of blessing and closes doors of oppression in response to our prayer.
¹⁸ ***The LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on High to have compassion on you....19 He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.*** (Isa 30:18-19; NAS)

IV. QUENCHING THE MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: SEVEN COMMON WAYS

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil. ²³ May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless... (1 Thes. 5:16-23)

- A. **Control**: refusing to make room for the Spirit's manifestations and activity
- B. **Exhibitionism**: adding to the Spirit's manifestations and drawing attention to ourselves
- C. **Neglecting the Word**: neglecting to test all things by biblical standards. Some "trust" the Spirit's leadership in a non-biblical way by trusting Him to uphold the standard of the Word in our midst.
- D. **Prayerlessness**: some "trust" the sovereignty of God in a non-biblical way by "trusting" God in their prayerlessness to do the part that He has assigned to us. This is not trusting God, but rather it is presumption. Some misapply the truth that if God wants something that He will do it. God has given us a dynamic role in determining some of the "quality of life" that we experience by our response to Him in our faith and obedience that is strengthened by prayer with fasting.

² You do not have because you do not ask. (Jas 4:2)

- E. **Despising**: we must not despise the days when God's power is released in a *small measure*. We walk in the tension of being grateful and faithful in the days of small things while continuing to be desperate to seek God for the full measure. We continue to pray for the fullness of revival because we see what we lack. However, we operate in faith by seeing what we have in God now.

¹⁰ For who has despised the day of small things? (Zech. 4:10)

¹⁷ Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. (Lk. 19:17)

- F. **Laziness**: some refuse the work and effort that required to regularly pray for people in need
- ¹¹ Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord...¹² continuing steadfastly in prayer... (Rom. 12:11-12)*

²⁶ His Lord said to him (who buried his talent), "You wicked and lazy servant..." (Mt. 25:26)

- G. **Compromise**: We seek to fully obey God by walking out the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). We must seek to live without compromise by declaring war on all known sin in our lives. Prayer and fasting are never a substitute for lack of obedience. The pursuit of full obedience is different than attaining it. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we aim at pursuing 100% obedience. Pursuing obedience in 98% of our life has limited blessing. It is in the last 2% that we receive "double" grace. We rob people by "lowering the standard of grace". *The cost of non-discipleship is very high.*

V. BEARING REPROACH: THE “STIGMA OF THE ANOINTING”

- A. We must bear the reproach that comes with God's power. Accept the “God orchestrated stigma” that is designed to humble those who walk in unusual power. God protects His people (that He anoints with great power) with problems. Do not expect to be treated better than Jesus was.
- ⁷ Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted... (2 Cor. 12:7)*
- B. We must take a stand and bear the reproach before and after the breakthrough of God. Do not wait until it becomes popular to seek God with spiritual violence. Join in now and take a stand.
- ⁹ For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last...for we have been made a spectacle ...both to angels and to men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake...we are weak...we are dishonored!...¹² being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure... (1 Cor. 4:9-12)*