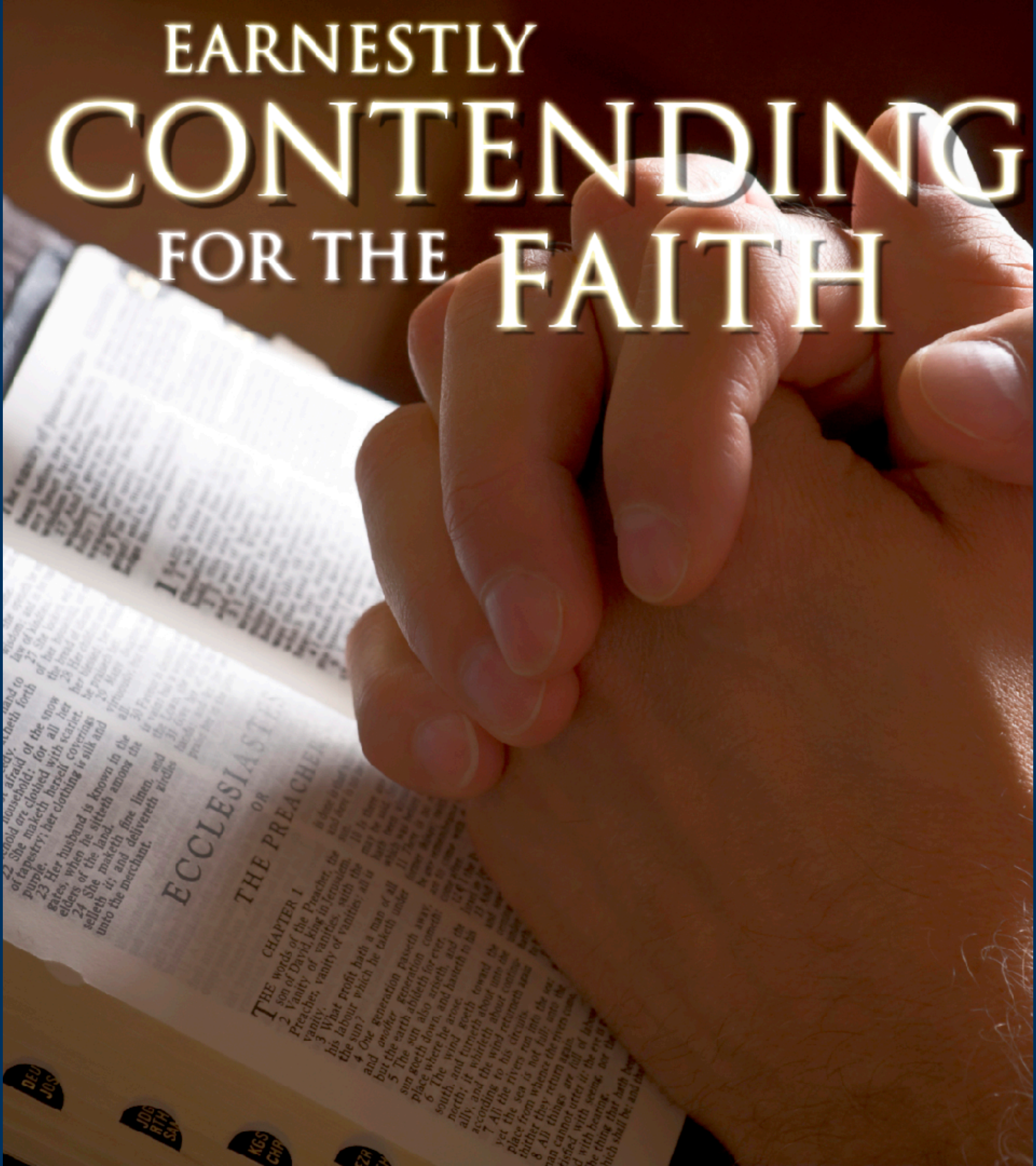


EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



ECCLESIASTES OR THE PREACHER

CHAPTER I

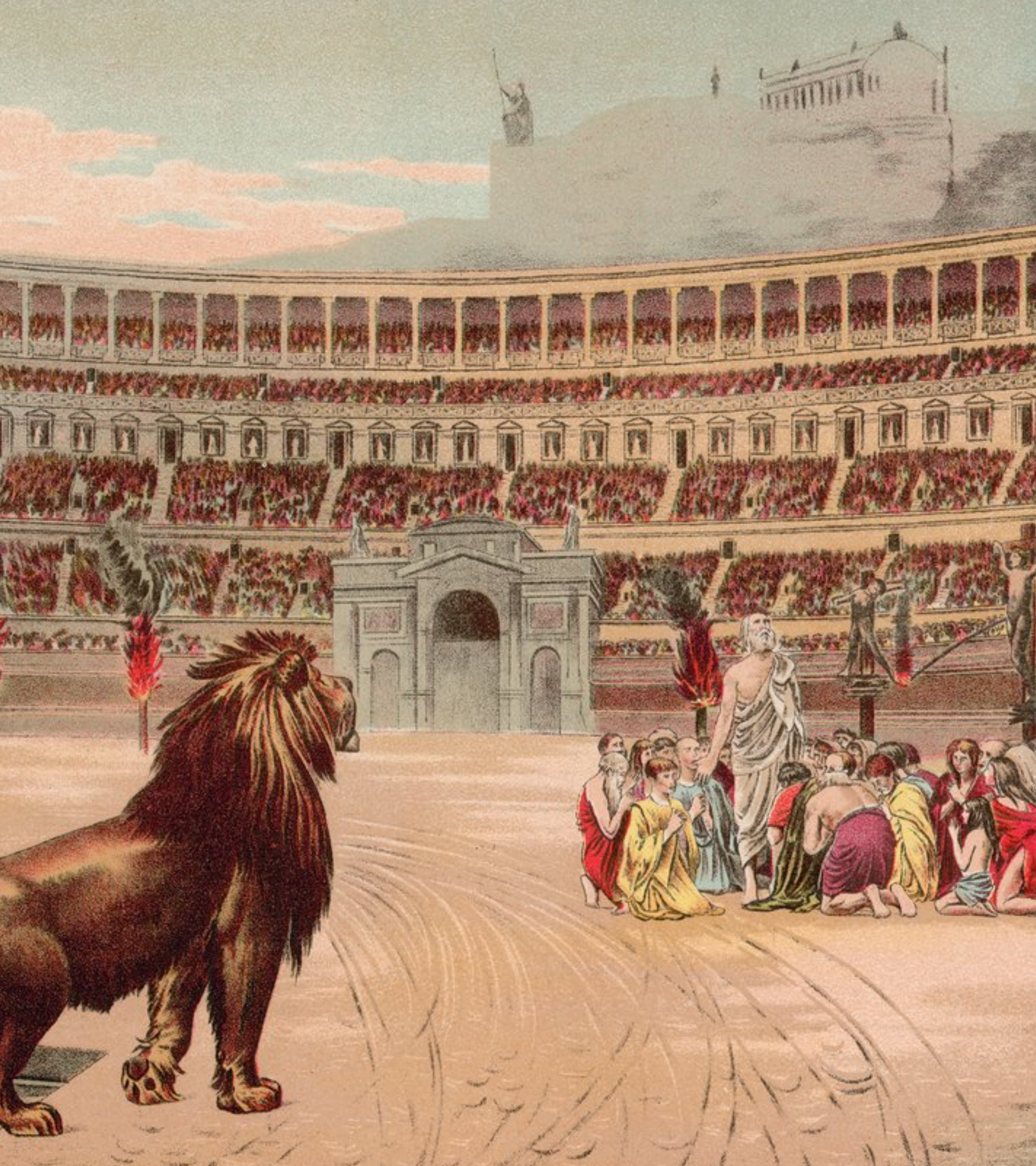
1 The words of David, king in Jerusalem,
2 Vanity of vanities, saith the
Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is
vanity.
3 What profit hath a man of all
his labour which he taketh under
the sun?
4 One generation passeth away,
and another cometh; but the earth
remaineth for ever.
5 The sun also ariseth, and the
sun goeth down, and hasteth to his
place where he ariseth,
6 The wind also ariseth, and the
south, and the north,
7 All things return again,
yet the sun is not fall;
8 All things return again,
yet the sun is not fall;
9 The rivers run into the sea,
yet the sea is not full;
10 The rivers run into the sea,
yet the sea is not full;
11 The rivers run into the sea,
yet the sea is not full;
12 The rivers run into the sea,
yet the sea is not full;

Jude 3 (KJV) — 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 4 (KJV) — 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 5 (KJV) — 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

1 John 4:9 (KJV) — 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.





The exhortation was to earnestly contend for the faith. The faith here is not faith as exercised by the individual, but Christianity itself in its historic doctrines and life-giving salvation.

“Earnestly contend” is epagonizomai (ἐπαγωνίζομαι), found only here in the New Testament. The simple verb was used of athletes contending in the athletic contests. The word speaks of a vigorous, intense, determined struggle to defeat the opposition. Our word “agony” is the English spelling of the noun form of this word. The Greek athletes exerted themselves to the point of agony in an effort to win the contest. With such intense effort does Jude say that saints should defend the doctrines of Christianity. (*Wuest’s Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, vol. 16, p. 235)

Romans 1:5 (KJV) — 5 By whom we
have received grace and apostleship,
for obedience to the faith among all
nations, for his name:

Galatians 1:23 (KJV) — 23 But they
had heard only, That he which
persecuted us in times past now
preacheth the faith which once he
destroyed.

We have no doubt, neither have we had a doubt for years, that the doctrines we hold today are present truth, and that we are nearing the judgment. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 355.1 — 1870)

It is as certain that we have the truth as that God lives; and Satan, with all his arts and hellish power, cannot change the truth of God into a lie. While the great adversary will try his utmost to make of none effect the word of God, truth must go forth as a lamp that burneth. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 595.4 — 1881)

1 Peter 5:8–9 (KJV) — 8 Be sober,
be vigilant; because your adversary
the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh
about, seeking whom he may devour:
9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith,
knowing that the same afflictions are
accomplished in your brethren that
are in the world.

Jude 4 (KJV) — 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 4 (KJV) — 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

lasciviousness is ἀσέλγεια (*aselgeia*)

2 Peter 2:7 (KJV) — 7 And delivered
just Lot, vexed with the **filthy**
conversation [life style] of the
wicked:

2 Peter 2:18 (KJV) — 18 For when they [them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, v. 10] speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much **wantonness**, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

We shall have more decided opposition to meet from those who have departed from the faith. Those who were once strong teachers, but who have forsaken the way of the Lord, will be just as strong in their opposition of the truth. There is need now that our people be educated to put their trust in God alone. They must learn that their trust is not to be placed in any human voice or arm of flesh. We need ever to keep in mind the experiences of the children of Israel, and learn the lesson that the record of their failures is intended to teach us. (*Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 22, Lt 312, 1907, par. 3)

Ezekiel 8:14 (KJV) — 14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

He who would confess Christ must have Christ abiding in him. He cannot communicate that which he has not received. The disciples might speak fluently on doctrines, they might repeat the words of Christ Himself; but unless they possessed Christlike meekness and love, they were not confessing Him. A spirit contrary to the spirit of Christ would deny Him, whatever the profession. Men may deny Christ by evilspeaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind. They may deny Him by shunning life's burdens, by the pursuit of sinful pleasure.

They may deny Him by conforming to the world, by uncourteous behavior, by the love of their own opinions, by justifying self, by cherishing doubt, borrowing trouble, and dwelling in darkness. In all these ways they declare that Christ is not in them. And “whosoever shall deny Me before men,” He says, “him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.”

(The Desire of Ages, p. 357.2)

We may deny Christ in our life, by the love of ease, love of self, jesting and joking, and by seeking the honor of the world. We may deny him in our outward appearance, by a proud look or costly apparel, or by conformity to the world. We shall not be able to exhibit in our character the life of Christ, or the sanctifying influence of the truth, only by constant watchfulness and persevering and almost unceasing prayer. (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4b, p. 93.2)

We may also deny Christ by pride of dress and conformity to the world, or by uncourteous behavior.

We may deny Him by loving our own opinions and by seeking to maintain and justify self. We may also deny Him in allowing the mind to run in the channel of lovesick sentimentalism and to brood over our supposed hard lot and trials. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 331.3)

Jude 5 (KJV) — 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.



While at Battle Creek in August, 1868, I dreamed of being with a large body of people. A portion of this assembly started out prepared to journey. We had heavily loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice; on the other was a high, smooth, white wall, like the hard finish upon plastered rooms. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 594.1)

As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. In some places it seemed so very narrow that we concluded that we could no longer travel with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the horses, and journeyed on horseback. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 594.2)

As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road down the steep precipice.

As we did this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall and caused us to sway toward the precipice.

We feared that we should fall and be dashed in pieces on the rocks.

We then cut the luggage from the horses, and it fell over the precipice. We continued on horseback, greatly fearing, as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our balance and fall. At such times a hand seemed to take the bridle and guide us over the perilous way.

*(Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2,
p. 594.3)*

As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could no longer go with safety on horseback, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another. At this point small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall; these we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon the path.

As we traveled, the cord moved along with us.

The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes, so we slipped them from our feet and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 595.1)

We then thought of those who had not accustomed themselves to privations and hardships. Where were such now? They were not in the company. At every change some were left behind, and those only remained who had accustomed themselves to endure hardships.

The privations of the way only made these more eager to press on to the end. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 595.2)

Our danger of falling from the pathway increased. We pressed close to the white wall, yet could not place our feet fully upon the path, for it was too narrow. We then suspended nearly our whole weight upon the cords, exclaiming: "We have hold from above! We have hold from above!" The same words were uttered by all the company in the narrow pathway. As we heard the sounds of mirth and revelry that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered.

We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. We heard instrumental music and loud laughter, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway. Much of the time we were compelled to suspend our whole weight upon the cords, which increased in size as we progressed. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 595.3)

I noticed that the beautiful white wall was stained with blood. It caused a feeling of regret to see the wall thus stained. This feeling, however, lasted but for a moment, as I soon thought that it was all as it should be. Those who are following after will know that others have passed the narrow, difficult way before them, and will conclude that if others were able to pursue their onward course, they can do the same.

And as the blood shall be pressed from their aching feet, they will not faint with discouragement; but, seeing the blood upon the wall, they will know that others have endured the same pain. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 596.1)

At length we came to a large chasm, at which our path ended. There was nothing now to guide the feet, nothing upon which to rest them. Our whole reliance must be upon the cords, which had increased in size until they were as large as our bodies. Here we were for a time thrown into perplexity and distress. We inquired in fearful whispers: "To what is the cord attached?"

My husband was just before me. Large drops of sweat were falling from his brow, the veins in his neck and temples were increased to double their usual size, and suppressed, agonizing groans came from his lips. The sweat was dropping from my face, and I felt such anguish as I had never felt before. A fearful struggle was before us. Should we fail here, all the difficulties of our journey had been experienced for nought. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 596.2)

Before us, on the other side of the chasm, was a beautiful field of green grass, about six inches high. I could not see the sun; but bright, soft beams of light, resembling fine gold and silver, were resting upon this field. Nothing I had seen upon earth could compare in beauty and glory with this field. But could we succeed in reaching it? was the anxious inquiry. Should the cord break, we must perish. Again, in whispered anguish, the words were breathed:

“What holds the cord?”

For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed: “Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now.” Still we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken: “God holds the cord. We need not fear.” These words were then repeated by those behind us, accompanied with: “He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far in safety.” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 596.3)

My husband then swung himself over the fearful abyss into the beautiful field beyond. I immediately followed. And, oh, what a sense of relief and gratitude to God we felt! I heard voices raised in triumphant praise to God. I was happy, perfectly happy. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 597.1)

Will you
earnestly contend
for the faith
which was once
delivered to the
saints?

