

Contending Earnestly For The Faith

by

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October 6, 2011

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Jude 1:3-4

As we begin to focus on the purpose of The Epistle Of Jude, we see that his original desire was to write about our common salvation shared in Christ: Jude 1:3, “*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.*”

The need to change his purpose is seen in the next verse: Jude 1:4, “*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.*”

That men “*crept in unawares*” should give us pause. That such could happen, despite the many warnings given by Jesus, Paul, and Peter. How much easier, then, for this to happen today when we live in time far removed from those initial warnings! In light of this, Jude’s call to “*contend earnestly for the faith*” becomes even more relevant for us today.

We ought to appreciate “*the need*” to contend for the faith. We should understand “*the how*” when it comes to contending earnestly for the faith.

In this study, “Contending Earnestly For The Faith”, it is “the need” and “the how” that we examine more closely.

The “need” to contend earnestly for the faith

Some will deny the all-sufficiency of the scriptures. This can be inferred from the phrase “*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” The expression “*once for all*” can rightly be worded “one time for all time”. That is, “*the faith*” (that body of doctrine which we are to believe) was delivered to the church “one time for all time”.

Revelation was not to be repeated, nor was there more to be revealed later on! That God has revealed all that He would have us know is evident from such statements like those of:

Paul, telling the Ephesian elders: Acts 20:27, “*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*”

Peter, writing that God has given us: 2 Pet. 1:3, “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and*

godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

If we have “*all things*”, and if we have the “*whole counsel of God*”, what else is there? Thus the Scriptures, which contain the faith delivered “*once for all*”, contains all we need to become what God wants of us! 2 Tim. 3:16-17, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*”

But when people suggest that God’s revelation is incomplete, or it is still in progress; or that God’s revelation needs to be repeated; then our task is to “*contend earnestly for the faith once delivered*”!

Some will pervert the doctrine of grace.

There were those in Jude’s day “*who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness (lewdness)*”. Their doctrine of grace gave them excuse to sin. So much so, that they engaged in that which was openly shameful (lewd). Perhaps they said as in Rom. 6:1, “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*”

There are some today who pervert the grace of God to excuse their disregard for the commands found in God’s Word; to justify their lifestyle that is contrary to the principles of the Bible. For they are likely to say: “*God is too loving — His grace is too wonderful — to condemn us when we are so sincere!*”

But those who “*contend earnestly for the faith*” will be ever mindful of what the grace of God truly teaches. Tit. 2:11-12, “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,*”

The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts! It teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age!

Some will deny God’s authority.

Jude had to deal with those who “*...deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*”.

The emphasis appears to be on the term “*Lord*”, used to describe God and Jesus. The term “*lord*” comes from kurios {koo’-ree-os}, which is related to the word kuros (supremacy); meaning “*supreme in authority*”.

These people were denying the authority rightly belonging to God and Jesus.

Today we often face people denying the authority of God and Jesus by their lack of respect to the Word of God; by their setting up other standards of authority for what they believe or do; such as a synod, convention, council; such as a pope, bishop, minister, or their own person.

But those who “*contend earnestly for the faith once delivered*” will recognize the authority which belongs to Christ.

- Matt. 28:18, “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*”
- Eph. 1:21-22, “*Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*”

They will recognize the authority delegated to His apostles.

- John 13:20, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*”
- 1 Cor. 14:37, “*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*”
- 1 Thess. 2:13, “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*”
- Acts 2:42, “*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*”

Clearly the need to “*contend earnestly for the faith*” is present, for just as there were those in Jude’s day who denied the all-sufficiency of God’s Word, perverted the doctrine of grace, and denied the authority of God and Jesus; so there are such people today! How then shall we do it?

The “how” to contend earnestly for the faith

We must contend earnestly. The matter is serious; we are at war! Paul describes the nature of our warfare:

- 2 Cor. 10:3-6, *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”*
- Eph. 6:10-13, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

This is not a time to be unprepared; we must arm ourselves! We must therefore contend with vigor, even to the point of agony, for *“the faith once delivered to the saints”!*

We must use the weapons at our disposal. Paul defines our weaponry in Eph. 6:13-18, *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”*

- Girded with truth.
- The breastplate of righteousness.
- Feet shod with the gospel of peace.
- The shield of faith.
- The helmet of salvation.
- The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.
- Watching with all prayer.

Notice that most of these things are for our own defense, lest we be lost in the struggle! The elements of truth, righteousness, the

gospel, faith, salvation, etc., are needed for our own salvation as much as for those we seek to conquer.

Some people are so quick to take up the sword, they leave the rest of their armor behind!

Paul also has something to say about other weapons that are “mighty in God”. Such qualities as found in: 2 Cor. 10:1-6, *“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”*

Making sure that we are first “spiritual”, and then displaying gentleness and caution. Gal. 6:1, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”*

Refraining from quarrels, applying gentleness, the Word, with patience and humility correcting the opposition. 2 Tim. 2:23-26, *“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”*

Conclusion

The call to “*contend earnestly for the faith*” is not a license to engage in “contentions” and “outbursts of wrath”.

- Gal. 5:19-21, *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

- 1 Cor. 3:1-3, *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”*

But it is a call to vigorously contend with all the weapons at our disposal. First and foremost, with the Word of God, applied first to self and then to others. But also, with the Christ-like qualities that are “mighty in God” to win people over to obedience to Christ.

It is the fact that many are not obeying Christ as Lord, but perverting His teaching or setting themselves up as their own authority. That makes it necessary that we “*contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints*”.

Whose side of this battle are YOU on? Have you submitted to Him whom God has made both Lord and Christ? Are you continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine?

Acts 2:36-42, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*

