

Contending for the Faith *By James Moriello*

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at Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI*

“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.” (Jude 3)

The Letter of Jude was written to believers not only to encourage them on the Christian journey, but also to warn them against apostates, or false teachers. Such teachers were around in Old Testament times, while Jesus and His Apostles were on the earth, and they still exist today—often times in the church. The Apostle Paul prophesied the latter, saying: “For I know this, after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29-30). Jesus says of their day of judgment: “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:22-23). It is incumbent upon all Christians, particularly ministers and teachers, to “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock” , contending “earnestly for the faith”, and warning the faithful, knowing that one’s judgment will be according to the influence entrusted by God (Acts 20:28-31; Jude 3; James 3:1). With the help of God the Holy Spirit, this minister will not be remiss in these duties this morning. To this end, we will take six applications from our text this morning which all relate directly back to our text; that there is one faith, that this faith was delivered by means of the Holy Scriptures, that the content of the Christian faith is doctrinal, that we are to contend for but not compromise the faith, where compromising with false doctrine leads us, and a warning against associations that will hinder the Christian.

There is one faith. Notice the definite article in our text: “contend earnestly for the faith”. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one

hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Christianity is unified in the spiritual bond, and that unification is brought about by God Himself through His Son Jesus Christ. This one faith is shared by individual believers of many denominations who believe the essential content of the faith: that Jesus Christ is God, that He is the only way to heaven, that He came to earth, lived a sinless life, died, was buried, and rose from the dead (John 1:1, 3:16, 11:25-26, 14:6, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Hebrews 4:15).

This faith was delivered by means of the Holy Scriptures. Otherwise, how would we know its content? The reason we know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and that the one way to heaven has been provided is because God has witnessed to us through His Spirit and His Word! There are those who do not believe that Scripture is without error, or they try to explain away parts of it that they do not like because it offends them or stands in opposition to society today. Many churches, for instance, condone homosexuality and place women in the pulpit—in clear opposition to the faith that was delivered to us in the Bible (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Timothy 2:11-12). God’s Word was around a lot longer than anything in the world, and it will remain the same for all time. “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). God’s Book will never steer you wrong, but it will surely steer you right! “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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The content of the Christian faith is doctrinal. There are those who do not want to talk about doctrine in the churches, lest some may be offended, and their membership and coffers shrink. The church must “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine”, continuing “steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Titus 2:1; Acts 2:42). The whole point of the Bible as it relates to the Christian living out his or her life is that there be a body of truth, and that it be faithfully taught by those gifted to do so according to God’s guidelines. Doctrine is related to theology, which is the study of God. It is through studying God through His

revealed truth that we learn of His character and fall more in love with He who bought us with His priceless blood! The most essential doctrine of the Christian faith is salvation by grace through faith, which involves believing in the content of the salvation message (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). There are those who add works to the gospel, by claiming that sacraments or other human works can impart saving grace, which is a false gospel (Ephesians 2:8-10). There are those who teach that speaking in tongues or some other gift is necessary to be saved in addition to believing the gospel. This too is a false gospel because it adds conditions to salvation that God never added (John 3:16). Others claim that there are many ways to attain to heaven, which is a denial of the exclusive nature of the gospel (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). There are also religious systems, generally cultic in nature, which deny the deity of Christ and/or the Trinity (1 John 1:1-5; Matthew 3:16-17). In denying the power of God behind the message, a false gospel is presented.

We are to contend for the faith, not compromise it. When we contend for something, we promote it actively. Christian, contend for your faith by your words and by the way you live your life! A husband who loves his wife will contend for her affection by romancing her, but will have no sense of humor when another man tries to do the same. Anything that draws you away from or picks apart your faith in Jesus Christ must be discarded immediately, for worship accepts no compromise (Exodus 20:1-6). Beware of compromising your faith on one point, for many have fallen away by doing so. Compromise may be expedient for awhile, but you will lose your respect and probably your testimony. Worst of all, you will sacrifice your close communion with Christ, if indeed you ever had it.

Let us see where compromising with false doctrine leads us. To that end, we will illustrate it by today's ecumenical movement. There is a movement afoot today to unify the various Christian (and often non-Christian) religious institutions into one unit. It all sounds wonderful until we see what we get as a result. Within professing Christendom, there are four general categories of belief. There are those who place human tradition on the same plane as Bible Truth. There are those who are liberal in that they do not accept the fact that God meant what He

said when He inspired the words of Scripture. Such folks vote on what they think God should have said, blatantly disregarding what He did say! There are those who place emotional experience, so called prophetic visions, and the like, on a higher plane than God's objective truth, rarely if ever testing them against God's Word. They seek to make themselves authorities by considering themselves apostles, prophets, and 'faith healers'. All of these things are understood differently than the Bible teaches that they ought to be in order to exalt individuals (Ephesians 2:20). How many 'faith healers' have you seen in the local hospital? However, millions have been fleeced by these charlatans, in God's house no less. The fourth category of professing Christians is those who affirm the Bible as the guide in all matters of faith and practice, understood in its literal sense unless the context proves otherwise. Now, when you put all or some of these groups together, you get confusion. All that can be agreed upon is that Jesus Christ is the basis of the message, but everybody believes something different about Him. Even the message of salvation is confused. This is essentially what we have with the World Council of Churches and the Rhode Island Council of Churches—a universal body which gets along wonderfully but stands for nothing. Good works and social justice are stressed (both good things), but people are not being saved, and real revival—which is always based on the truth of the Bible—is not taking place (Ezra 8-9). This is because true Christian unity is brought about by God, and cannot be created by men (Ephesians 4:1-6; John 17:21). It is illustrative in recent American history how many of today's denominations no longer take a stand on doctrines that Jesus took a stand on because they started down the road to compromise decades ago, until it became an institutional cancer that cannot be cured.

The Apostle Paul counsels that we practice doctrinal purity and be separate from those who teach error, saying: "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 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" (Romans 16:17-18). "Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good

habits” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Be a Berean, and search the Scriptures daily to test the truth of what you hear and read concerning Christ Jesus. Take the time to find out the beliefs of those you see, hear, and keep company with. Many of the mega-church Pastors popular in media today have compromised the gospel message for the sake of popularity, doing such things as affirming that homosexual behavior is okay, which it is not, or that Mormonism is not a cult, which it is. Beware of those who practice occult means of telepathy, ‘sensing someone needs to be healed’ (while they do so, there is a message on the bottom of your screen looking for money, of course). Avoid Pentecostals and those who call themselves Charismatic Christians, for they blaspheme the Holy Spirit by misusing His gifts, add pagan practices borrowed from Eastern religions, most add a condition to salvation (tongues), exalt men and women above the pillars of the faith, many deny the security of salvation and the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, and a few even deny that the saved struggle with the sin nature! I will close with three points of advice. Although there are very few sound Bible teachers out there today, Les Feldick, David Jeremiah, and John MacArthur are all of sound doctrine. Always participate in public worship at a local church that exalts Jesus Christ as God, and holds fast to God’s Word and its doctrine (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25). However, the best Bible teacher is God the Holy Spirit, and the best book is the Holy Bible itself—there are no substitutes for it (John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).