

Contending For The Faith

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When the inspired writer Jude wrote the short letter which bears his name, he intended “*to write to you concerning our common salvation*” (v. 3a). What a great idea! Whether Christians are old or young, black or white, rich or poor, we have common ground – we have been saved from our sins by the grace of God. Being reminded of that positive message comforts and encourages us.

Rather than sticking to his original plan, however, Jude “*found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*” (v. 3b). What compelled Jude to shift from a positive letter of comfort and encouragement to a rather strident condemnation of sin and call to alarm? Simply this: early Gnostic false teachers had infiltrated the church. They perverted the doctrine of divine grace as though it were a license to sin, and taught that Jesus was something less than Deity (see v. 4). Unless the church strongly resisted these ungodly men and their perverse doctrines, countless souls would be lost, and the advance of the gospel would come to a screeching halt.

Today, teachers of error still abuse the grace of God. Though most of them avoid the extremes of the early Gnostics of Jude’s time, they still promote a “cheap grace” philosophy that is unscriptural and will cause souls to be lost. For example, so-called evangelical denominations commonly teach “salvation by grace alone through faith alone.” Back in 1999 they even wrote a new Confession of Faith in which they not only affirm this falsehood, but condemn anyone who teaches otherwise as “preaching another gospel.” Tragically, one of the signers of that document is a popular author who used to be affiliated with churches of Christ – Max Lucado.

Jude’s exhortation to his readers to “contend earnestly for the faith” certainly applies to us. to contend for the faith is the same thing as to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:17). While the gospel certainly teaches salvation by grace, it is neither by “grace alone” nor through “faith alone.” We access the grace of God only when we trust Him and obey His word. Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:9).

Satan will see to it that the truth of the gospel is always under attack. Therefore, we need a positive message of comfort and encouragement. We also need to be aware of the challenges we face. May we all appreciate the salvation we have in common, and may we all contend earnestly for the faith!

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ONE BLOOD

“*And He (God) made from one blood every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth*” (Acts 17:26).

All people have a common origin. We are descended from one man, Adam, and his wife, Eve. Brother Marshall Keeble used to refer to every man as “brother.” When challenged on it, he responded: “Those I miss in Christ I get in Adam.”

That we are all “of one blood” is medically true. There are different blood types and, in the case of transfusions, it is life or death to be sure blood types match. However, blood type does not indicate nationality or race.

God does not discriminate on the basis of nationality or race (Acts 10:34), social class (Ephesians 6:9), or wealth (James 2:1-4), and neither should we (James 2:9).

Preaching against racial discrimination or opposing the claim that one race is superior to another is not “preaching a social gospel.” It is preaching against sin, like preaching against murder, srtealing, and sexual immorality.

–Cecil May, Jr. [adapted]; via *Preacher Talk*

Walk in the Good Way

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls’” (Jeremiah 6:16a).

Examine the different ways and ask which path follows the way laid out by Jesus. There is only one right way. In answering a question by Thomas, Jesus said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me*” (John 14:6).

The way to Father God is only through Jesus. Jesus said that the way to life is narrow. This narrow way leads to a narrow gate (Matthew 7:13-14).

There are a lot of ways which appear good and have leaders who look like they know where they are going. God said through Jeremiah, “*Ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is*” (Jeremiah 6:16). So, who do I ask?

The only answer that I have is search the Scriptures. Compare what men say with God’s word. Because the way is narrow, you cannot afford to stake your eternal life with the Father on what any man says. Fix your eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus quoted the promise from Jeremiah 6:16, “*you will find rest for your souls,*” when He called us to take His yoke and learn from Him (Matthew 11:28-30). There is rest when we are on the good path, because when we are on the good path, there is no twisting and turning. The path is straight.

Examine your way. Are you focused on following Jesus?

–Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)