

Faith & The Trail Of Blood

Lesson #43 Dec. 9, 2020

Jude 1:3-4 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. 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.

- This faith was "delivered and entrusted to God's holy people, the saints."
 - ALL believers, not just Christian leaders, are called to defend the truth of Jesus Christ.
- This faith was entrusted "once for all."
 - The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. [Eph. 2:20]
 - Through Christ's personal teachings and the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has already given the full message of truth to the apostles. [John 14:26; John 16:12-14]
 - Taught to the churches as the "whole counsel of God." [Acts 20:27]
 - Jude intends to stand against those who claim to receive "new" revelations of truth.
 - Paul gives a similar warning to not let anyone pervert the Gospel of Christ with new and different teachings.

Gal. 1:6-9 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

- God has spoken! Any new, continuing or special revelations of "truth" are to be rejected.

Jude's Concern

- "The Faith" is under attack from false teachers who are spreading dangerous heresies.
- Some seek to undermine and erode The Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Jude's Exhortation To Earnestly Contend For The Faith

- Describes an athlete striving with extreme intensity to win the victory in a physical competition. Fight strenuously

Contend = epagonizomai = agonize > only place used in NT > agonize for sound doctrine

- Contend come from the athletic world > a wrestling mat
- Contend implies a sense of danger >

There is something we are at great risk of losing if we do not contend for the faith.

Note: There is a growing unwillingness and intolerance to speak out strongly... Against immorality, Against materialism, Against false doctrine among us, Against denominational error.

- A general softness is growing! The average believer is trending away from controversy.

Numerous NT passages reinforce Jude's exhortation to contend for the faith.

They all use the language of competition and victory = fight, run, strive

A True Contender_vigorously endeavors to win the competition, not holding anything back.

I Tim. 6:11-21 Paul charges Timothy > Fight the good fight of faith as a soldier of God in pursuit of holy living, persistent service and defending the Gospel.

I Cor. 9:24-27 Paul advises believers to see themselves as runners in a race who "run in such a way as to get the prize."

Phil. 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Question: Has God preserved His Word?

Spurgeon: The Holy Ghost revealed much of precious truth & holy precept by the apostles, & to His teaching we would give earnest heed; But when men cite the authority of fathers, councils, & bishops, we give place for subjection, no, not for an hour.

They may quote Irenaeus or Cyprian, Augustine or Chrysostom; they may remind us of the dogmas of Luther or Calvin; they may find authority in Simeon, Wesley, or Gill.

We will listen to the opinions of these great men with the respect which they deserve as men, but having done so, we deny that we have anything to do with these men as authorities in the church of God, For there nothing has any authority, but "Thus saith The Lord of Hosts."

The Doctrine of the Bible is the most important Biblical Doctrine.

- ❖ If the Bible we hold in our hands is not the inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, eternal Word of the living God, then man does not possess the Word of God.
- ❖ If we do not possess the very Words of God then we cannot say,
 - Thus saith the Lord 3800 times
 - The Word of the Lord 331 times
 - The Word of God 109 times
- ❖ If the Bible is not the Word of God, then we cannot trust any of its teachings.

II Tim. 3:16 ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine...

- ❖ Reveals the revelation of God to man
- ❖ Reveals God's lessons for mankind on how to live life
- ❖ Reveals God the creator of all things
- ❖ Reveals God's relationship to His creation
- ❖ Reveals the character of God - Who God Is
- ❖ Reveals God's purpose for mankind: Creation/Salvation
- ❖ Reveals everything God wants us to know about life and eternity

Command: Study to show thyself approved unto God, meditate upon these things, give attendance to reading, exhortation, to doctrine, take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine The Bible is the only book on earth written by God.

II Pet. 1:21 Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord gave the word and great was the company of those that published it.

This Faith Is Worth Contending For

When the faith is at stake, our salvation is at stake. If the truth is lost, salvation is lost. The apostles and reformers were willing to die for the sake of the faith because they cared about the message of salvation being preserved—they cared about people and about the glory of God.

Question: Am I willing to contend for or even die for Truths of God's Word?

Throughout the centuries, God has preserved His Word and has raised up men and women for the task.

First Recorded Martyrdom In Post-New Testament Church History

Polycarp [69-156 AD] A direct disciple of John. Charged with being a Christian

A Christian = member of a politically dangerous cult whose rapid growth needed to be stopped. At age 86, he learned Roman officials were coming to arrest him. No doubt Polycarp could have escaped but already he had a dream in which he saw the pillow under his head burning with fire and he had awakened to tell his disciples, "I must be burned alive."

At his trial, the Roman Governor called upon Polycarp to recant his faith in Christ, to which he famously replied, "These eighty and six years have I served my Lord and He never did me any harm, and I cannot deny my Lord and Master now."

Then he said to him again, 'I will cause thee to be consumed by fire unless thou recant.'

But Polycarp said; the "fires of the stake last but a moment, whereas the fires of hell last for an eternity. Thou art ignorant of the fire of the future judgment and eternal punishment which is reserved for the ungodly. But why delayest thou? Come, do what thou wilt.'

As they prepared the stake, the Roman Soldiers tried to secure Polycarp with rope or nails.

Refusing, Polycarp told them, "He who grants me to endure the fire will enable me also to remain on the pyre unmoved, without the security you desire from nails."

He prayed aloud, the fire was lit, and his flesh was consumed. The chronicler of this martyrdom said it was "not as burning flesh but as bread baking or as gold and silver refined in a furnace."

Polycarp's death was remembered by "everyone—he is even spoken of by the heathen in every place."

Ponder Taking strength from his faith in Christ, he remained faithful to Christ through his life and through his death.

The Church had survived much persecution under various Roman Emperors, including the Great Persecution under Diocletian between AD 303 and 313. Emperor Constantine put an end to the persecution, and Christianity was eventually made the state religion of Rome.

As Rome began consolidating its power over the Church, there were dissenters who refused to acknowledge the bishop of Rome as their head. One such dissenter was the North African Bishop Donatus, who stood against Rome's understanding of the sacraments and infant baptism. The Donatists were condemned by the churches in Europe, but they continued to be a light for the gospel of grace in the days of Constantine.

Wiersbe: The first test of any religious teacher is: "What do you think of Jesus Christ? Is He God come in the flesh?" Anyone who denies this cardinal doctrine is a false teacher NO MATTER how correct he may be in other matters.

Arianism - A heresy regarding Deity of Jesus Christ after Constantine recognized the Church in AD 313.

Root Problem: Arius, a presbyter (priest) from Libya announced, "The Father existed before the Son. There was a time when the Son did not exist. Therefore, the Son was created by the Father. Therefore, although the Son was the highest of all creatures, he was not of the essence of God."

The net result of Arius' teaching was to reduce the Word (Jesus) to demigod.

Challenge From: Athanasius - Fought for Deity of Jesus Christ

Athanasius, a renowned Christian theologian, Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, was the 20th bishop of Alexandria, and served 45 years [June 328 - May 373].

Over 17 years were spent in 5 exiles ordered by 4 different Roman emperors.

There were 6 more incidents when he fled Alexandria to escape people seeking to take his life.

He became known as "Athanasius contra mundum" > Athanasius against the world.

Yet in the end, his theological enemies were "exiled" from the church's teaching.

It is his writings that shaped the future of the church.

In 356, while Athanasius was conducting a service with his congregation, 5,000 armed soldiers stormed the church building. Calmly, he began reading Psalm 136 and asked his congregation to respond. When He Read: "O Give Thanks Unto The Lord; For He Is Good," His Congregation Responded: "For His Mercy Endureth Forever."

He went into the desert to spend time with the monks and wrote articles in defense of the great truth that Christ is fully God. He stated Arians were idolaters who worshiped strange gods, no different from the heathen.

In 362, He was recalled to his flock, but was almost immediately driven away by those who were stung by his attacks against them. He left his weeping congregation but comforted them with the words: Be of good cheer; It Is Only A Cloud, Which Will Soon Pass On.

He escaped hired assassins on an imperial ship on the Nile and found refuge once again in the desert. He returned & was driven away again. He spent 4 months in the tomb of his father.

Athanasius died in 373; he never saw the final victory of his lifelong cause.

The church will always be indebted to the good fight he fought in protecting The Christological view of Scripture.

The Roman Catholic Church and Holy Roman Empire reached the height of their power and dominated Europe during The Middle Ages or the "Dark Ages" [5th-15th centuries].

- Time of the Crusades, the Great Schism, the Inquisition and the iron rule of the Roman Catholic Church
- A common-language Bible was being suppressed and the Bible was chained to the pulpits.

➤ However, throughout this difficult time, God had witnesses to the truth. God's hand is never "shortened that it cannot save" [Isaiah 59:1]. His truth was marching on.

The Waldensians were started in 1170 in Lyons, France, by a wealthy man named Valdes [Peter Waldo]. He valued poverty as the basis for Christian life. "No man can serve 2 masters, God and mammon. That you may learn to place hope in God and not in riches."

- They were a precursor to the Protestant Reformation.
- They faced mounting persecution from the Catholic church > rejected the teachings.
- They wore rough clothing and sandals, and preached repentance.
- They insisted the Bible to be their sole authority.
- In 1181 the archbishop of Lyons excommunicated the Waldensians.
- In 1184 the Pope declared them to be heretics.
- In the 1230's, persecution increased and lasted for 300 years.
- They went underground and in remote caves of the Alps.
- In 1487, Pope Innocent VIII pronounced a crusade against them and many villages were devastated.
- In 1545 two Waldensian towns in France, along with 28 smaller villages, were attacked and destroyed. The women were raped. About 4000 were killed.
- They are remembered for their bravery during a dark period of history, their perseverance under the brutality of the Holy Roman Empire, their commitment to Biblical authority and their conscientious dissent in the face of the Catholic church's error.

When infant baptism was introduced by the Church of Rome, various churches dissented and denounced the practice. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the Petrobrusians rejected infant baptism. They became known as Anabaptists; The Church Under The Cross.

They re-baptized believers who had been baptized as infants, maintaining that baptism is only valid if it was a conscious act of faith by the believer.

Their Covenant:	To live separate from the world To teach the Gospel faithfully To hold steadfastly to the truth
Their Significance	Formed their church after NT model Affirmed absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ Affirmed church based on voluntary commitment Refuted popular doctrine of infant baptism Rejected role of magistrate in religion

The Anabaptists survived intense persecution and still exist today.

Felix Manz = 1st Anabaptist Martyr > Sentenced to die on Jan. 5, 1527. Zurich prosecutors decided his punishment for 2nd baptism would be his 3rd baptism = drowning.

- ❖ Manz's hands bound to his knees, with stick thrust between his arms and legs
- ❖ Thrown into icy waters of Limmat River
- ❖ Last words: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

Truth: Martyrdom was the hallmark of the Church under the Cross. Jesus was their example.

- ❖ Persecuted by Catholics & Protestants
- ❖ More Anabaptist martyrs in 16th century at the hands of "Christians" than during the first 3 centuries under Roman pagans.

Result: Dispersion of Anabaptists and spread of their movement

- ❖ Remnants were formed in Germany, Moravia, Netherlands, England
- ❖ Loss of leadership weakened their movement

Long before Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg in 1517, there were men who had stood up for reform and the true gospel.

- ❖ John Wycliffe [Morning Star of the Reformation], an English theologian and Oxford professor who was condemned as a heretic in 1415 for teaching that the common people should have access to the Bible.
 - "The Bible is for the government of the people, by the people and for the people."
 - "Holy Scripture is the highest authority for every believer, the standard of faith and the foundation for reform."
 - "Every liberty we hold dear came from men, women and children who suffered and sacrificed to preserve the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The Council of Constance declared Wycliffe a heretic on May 4, 1415. [He died in 1384 as the result of a stroke. Dead 31 years!]

- They banned his writings, effectively both excommunicating him retroactively and making him an early forerunner of Protestantism.
- The Council decreed that Wycliffe's works should be burned and his bodily remains removed from consecrated ground. This order, confirmed by Pope Martin V, was carried out in 1428. Wycliffe's corpse was exhumed and burned and the ashes cast into the River Swift, which flows through Lutterworth.

What were his crimes? Translated Bible into English; Attacked Catholic teachings

Wycliffe: "All Christian life is to be measured by Scripture; by every word thereof."

- ❖ Jan Hus [1370-1415], a priest from Bohemia was excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1411.

"Seek the Truth, Listen to the Truth, Teach the Truth, Abide by the Truth, and Defend the Truth unto Death."

- The papal bull that prevented any in Prague from taking communion until Hus was gone, forced Hus to leave Prague and go into semi-exile.
- Council of Constance declared Hus a heretic in July, 1415.
- Hus was sentenced to burn at the stake unless he would recant. Instead, Hus offered a short prayer: "Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray to the to have mercy on my enemies."
- Burned at the stake on July 6, 1415 for his opposition to the Church of Rome.

The Blood of the Martyrs

The faith we cherish was preserved for us with the blood of hundreds of reformers. From 1555 to 1558 Queen Mary, the Catholic ruler in England, had 288 Protestant reformers burned at the stake—men like John Rogers, John Hooper, Rowland Taylor, Robert Ferrar, John Bradford, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, and Thomas Cranmer. Why were they burned? They stood by a truth—that the real presence of Jesus' body is not in the eucharist but in heaven at the Father's right hand.

For that truth they endured the excruciating pain of being burned alive.

The blood of the martyrs is a powerful testimony that the faith once for all delivered to the saints is worth contending for.

Spurgeon: The blood of martyrs is on the Bible, the blood of translators and confessors.

The doctrines which we preach to you are doctrines which have been baptized in blood.

This Faith Is Repeatedly Threatened from Within the Church

Bloody Mary was a professing Christian not a barbarian. The worst enemies of Christian doctrine are professing Christians who do not hold to the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Contentions with Professing Christians

Phil. 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

- Virtually all Paul's letters address the contentions he had with professing Christians.
- Much of our contending for the faith will be with professing Christians who teach and write things which we believe are contrary to the faith once delivered to the saints.
- The Bible makes it clear that the faith will be repeatedly threatened from within.

Maxwell: The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. When she ceases to bleed, she ceases to bless. She can thrive through persecution but never through peace and plenty.

Hall of Faith Heb. 11:1-40

My circumstances may seem impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown.

True Biblical faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of my circumstances and the consequences.

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

² For by it [faith] the elders obtained a good report.

³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

⁴ By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

⁵ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

- ⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
- ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.
- ⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
- ⁹ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:
- ¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
- ¹¹ Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.
- ¹² Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.
- ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
- ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
- ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.
- ¹⁶ But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.
- ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,
- ¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:
- ¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.
- ²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.
- ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.
- ²² By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.
- ²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.
- ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;
- ²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
- ²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

²⁸ Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

³³ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

³⁴ Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

³⁶ And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

³⁸ (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

⁴⁰ God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Heb.12:1-3 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Oswald Chambers "Suffering either gives me myself or it destroys myself. If you receive yourself in the fires of sorrow, God will make you nourishment for other people."

Spurgeon: There are NO crown-wearers in Heaven who were not cross-bearers here below.

He Will Hold Me Fast

Instrumental at beginning: Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side.

Leave to thy God to order and provide, in every change He faithful will remain

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;
When the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path;
For my love is often cold; He must hold me fast.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;
For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

Those He saves are His delight, Christ will hold me fast;
Precious in his holy sight, He will hold me fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost; His promises shall last;
Bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;
For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast.

For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast;
Justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast.
Raised with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast
'Till our faith is turned to sight, When He comes at last!

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;
For my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast. [2x]

Instrumental at end: Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side.