



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 16:01:2013

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Study 3: EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Text: 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."

As a good shepherd who was diligent to know the state of his flock, and looked well to his herds (Proverbs 27:23) Jude discovered that the growth of the church has also brought in "tares among the wheat" (Matthew 13:24-30) and "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15). To leave them unchecked under the excuse of "Christian love", "fellowship" and "unity" could have significantly damaged the spirituality and strength of the church as well as the eternal destiny of the members through their:

1. false doctrines that denied "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs.4),
2. superficial and lightness in lifestyles that "turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (vs. 4)

As a good soldier of Christ (2 Timothy 2:3) he fought the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12) by drawing the "Sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) to confront the danger head on by exposing the danger so as to purify the church and protect true believers. In this study, we learn of:

- The necessity of Contending for the faith
- The nature of contending for the faith
- When and Where to contend for the faith

THE NECESSITY OF CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

It is worth noting that Jude intention was to write to the believers of the common salvation, but felt "...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..." because false teachers have secretly infiltrated the church under the disguise of "apostles of Christ", "angels of light" and "ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15), but their doctrines and lifestyles contradicted those of Christ. He realised that if these dangers are not first addressed through appropriate warning, then the believers would not be able to be on guard enough in order to hold onto their "common salvation". He did not shy away from the fear of offending or being labelled "negative" by administering warning, knowing fully well that effective planting can only take place after effective pulling down (Jeremiah 1:10). The false teachers may have included:

1. The antinomians who pervert grace on the grounds that the law is dead and they are under grace which guarantees them forgiveness irrespective of how much they sin (Romans 6). Some of them may have been earnest but misguided people who misunderstood grace and freedom from the law. This is a type of 'eternal security' (Ezekiel 33:12,13; Hebrews 10:26-31) that turn the grace of God into an excuse for flagrant sin by trading upon God's forgiveness (verses 4,7,8,10,12,16).

2. The Gnostics who questioned the uniqueness of God and the deity of Christ [Note the use of the word “only” by Jude (vs.4)]. These could be similar to multi-faith approach in contemporary times, which claim that all religions lead to God. Such beliefs produce religious pride, snobbery of true Christians and promote division (e.g. class distinction) in the church.
3. The Proud ones who reject authority and promote of disrespect (vs. 8,9).

New teachings, revelations or prophecies, etc are not always evidence of spiritual innovations especially when they are not in line with Scriptures. Believers are to contend for faith whenever “Christian” teachings, worship styles, prophecy, etc lead to:

1. Sin, backsliding, fear, careless living or lightness of spirit that produces spiritual weakness (I John 3:9).
2. Prosperity and / or success without godliness (1 Timothy 6:3-12, Matthew 6:33; Psalm 111:10).
3. Dullness in discernment of satanic strategies and lack of victory over satan.
4. Loss of the presence of God and holy lifestyle that pleases God.
5. Inability to resist the deceptive enticement of people, the world and its glittering fashions (I John 2:15-7)
6. Adulteration, dilution or rejection of the clear teachings of the word of God under the excuse of wisdom or modernisation.

THE NATURE OF CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

How should a believer contend for the faith? “Contending” implies to fight, defend, argue with, uphold, strive, battle, struggle and stand for the faith irrespective of the cost or consequences (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Every believer must be capable of taking a direct stand against those in the professing church who deny the absolute truth of scripture or distort the pure faith of true Christianity. The Greek word for ‘contend’ is the root for the word ‘agony’; which could render this text as “... to earnestly agonise for the faith” (vs. 3); which provides additional perspective such as:

- 1) Standing for the truth, knowing scripture and teaching others the truth of the gospel in order to oppose false and erroneous doctrines.
- 2) Agonising in ones own lifestyle to be obedient to the truth, through personal sacrifice and discipline (2 Timothy 4:6-7).

Note Jude’s use of the word earnestly which implies that the contending should be with passion, zeal, fervency and persistently (I Peter 5:8,9). Effective contention for the faith require believers being thoroughly grounded in the word of God (Colossians 3:16; Proverbs 3:1; 7:1-2); righteous living (I Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22) and watching our associations (I Corinthians 15:33) and abiding in Christ (John 15:4).

WHERE AND WHEN TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

The proverbial story of Eneke the bird who determined to fly without perching because men have learnt to shoot without missing, reminds us of the spiritual truth to watch all the time and earnestly contend for the faith anywhere and anytime that danger is detected. We are to contend at home, neighbourhood, offices, schools, church etc. Throughout church history, righteous men of God have had to earnestly contend for the faith against false doctrines. They have faithfully served their generation and preserved the truth for us. Every Christian is under divine responsibility to take up their baton, and uncompromisingly continue the fight for the sake of preserving their souls and of the future generations.