

“The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints”

Jude 1-4

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** The New Testament contains many warnings concerning false teachers and false teaching:

Matt. 7:15: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Acts 20:29-31: “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

2 Pet. 2:1-2: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

1 Jn. 4:1: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Gal. 1:7-9: “...there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

2. We've been studying from the booklet *Answering Religious Error*.

A. From one perspective, I don't like studying religious error; its somewhat depressing that so many otherwise good people “wrest” Scriptures so blatantly and unapologetically. Their blindness to the truth is very troubling to me (**2 Cor. 4:4:** “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”).

B. But from another perspective such studies are profitable.

(1) First, studying religious error forces us to dig through the Scriptures and use our God-given logic to properly determine what the Bible actually teaches.

(2) Second, it is important that error does not go unchallenged; souls are at stake.

3. Our lesson this morning will address the body of teaching of the New Testament by focusing on what the book of Jude says about “the faith.”

A. Most conservative scholars believe the author of the book of Jude is not the apostle identified as “Judas the son of James” (Lk. 6:15).

B. Jude identifies himself as the “brother of James” (Jude 1).

C. Most likely this “James” was not the brother of the apostle John (Matt. 10:2), but the “James” who was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus (**Matt. 13:55:** “Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Josés, Simon, and Judas?”).

4. The first four verses of Jude sounded a warning to those within the church of that day to guard against “certain men” who would creep in “unnoticed” and undermine that system of divine truth which Jude called “the faith.”

- A. Jude was written late in the first century when the issues facing the church had taken on a different complexion from those of the first few decades after Pentecost.
- B. By this time, the formal Jewish opposition had lost its punch and the church faced the insidious threats of bizarre philosophical approaches which came in with the advance of the gospel into Greece and North Africa.
- C. The trouble they faced did not come from a frontal assault on “*the faith*” from the unbelieving world but from the deceitful behavior of those who professed allegiance to the truth while drawing away disciples after themselves (recall Paul in Acts 20:29-30).
- D. Attacks from without have always drawn the people of God closer together; while the greatest devastation has always come from within.

5. **3** Let’s consider four important points concerning “*The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints.*”

I. INTRODUCTION:

First, the faith once delivered to the saints is...

I. **3** A body of truth: “the faith”:

- A. The appeal of Jude 3 is “*to contend earnestly for the faith*” argues there is a unique *body of teaching* in the New Testament:
 - ☛ “the doctrine of Christ” (2 Jn. 9),
 - ☛ “the word of Christ” (Col. 3:16),
 - ☛ “the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10),
 - ☛ “the apostle’s doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

B. **4** Why is “the faith” so unique?

(1) It is distinguished from all human wisdom:

1 Cor. 2:4-5: “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Eph. 3:3: “...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery...”

Gal. 1:11-12: “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

(2) There is only “one faith”:

Eph. 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all...”

- (a) So-called “Christendom” often uses the word “*faith*” to describe different denominations (e.g., the Baptist faith, the Methodist faith, the Presbyterian faith) or other “religions” (e.g., the Buddhist faith, the Hindu faith, the Moslem faith).
- (b) According to this multi-faith philosophy, there are many faiths; and these various “faiths” are all legitimate and lead one to heaven.
- (c) But the Bible unequivocally teaches there is but “one faith,” not “many faiths”!
 - (i) In the true religion of Jesus Christ there are no more “faiths” than there are “Lords” or “God and Father”: just ONE!

- (ii) The denominational world, or any philosophy advocating multiple “faiths,” is just plain wrong.
- (3) What pertains to “the faith” can be determined. If not, then contention for it would be impossible.
 - (a) It is popular these days to argue that truth cannot be known absolutely, that every generation and every person must find what appears to him to be truth.
 - (b) But, two thousand years ago Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life*” (Jn. 14:6).
 - (c) Before Pilate, he said, “*I came to bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.*” (Jn. 18:37).
 - (d) The fulness of grace and truth came by him (**Jn. 1:14**: “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*”; **Jn. 1:17**: “*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*”).
 - (e) He promised his apostles to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into “*all truth*” (Jn. 16:13-14).
- C. Therefore, the “*truth*” and the “*faith*” are synonymous.
 - (1) Thus, if there is “*one faith*”; then there is but “*one truth*”!
 - (2) It is the body of teaching or doctrine contained in the New Testament; known as the “*gospel*” (Rom. 1:16-17), “*the doctrine of Christ*” (2 Jn. 9), the “*word*” (2 Tim. 4:2).
 - (3) It emanates from God and not man; like God it is perfect and unchangeable.

Gal. 1:11-12: “*But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

1 Cor. 2:4-5: “*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*”

Second, the faith once delivered to the saints is...

2. A complete truth: “once for all delivered”:

- A. The finality and completeness of this body of teaching is indicated by the Greek word *hapax* translated “*once*” (KJV), “*once for all*” (NIV and NASV).
 - (1) This body of truth has one time for all time been made known.
 - (2) This passage strikes a death blow to all claims of latter day revelations (e.g., Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Popes of Rome, Watchtower Society, etc.).
 - (3) It argues the finality, completeness and all sufficiency of God’s revelation (Jn. 16:13).
 - (4) There is nothing left to be added from human wisdom.
 - (5) For man to add to it or subtract from it is an egregious sin that will send one to eternal torment (cf. Gal. 1:6-9; “*accursed,*” KJV, NKJV, NASV; “*anathema,*” ASV; “*eternally condemned.*” NIV; Rev. 22:18-19).
- B. This finality and completeness is confirmed by the apostle Peter when he writes: “*His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 1:3).

- (1) It was during one interval of human history that God began and completed the revelation of that body of truth called *“the faith.”* (cf. Eph. 4:5); Jude 3: *“once”* means *“once, one time”* (Thayer on *hapax*).
 - (a) Paul said, *“once was I stoned”* (2 Cor. 11:25; i.e., *hapax*).
 - (i) That means he was stoned one time and one time only!
 - (ii) His stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:19) totally exhausted the number of times he was stoned.
 - (b) The Hebrew writer said: *“...Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...”* (Heb. 9:29; *hapax*).
 - (i) Jesus died one, and only one, time!
 - (ii) His offering of Himself totally exhausted the number of times he was offered.
 - (iii) There won’t be a “next time” for His death; only His coming *“without sin unto salvation”* (Heb. 9:28).
 - (c) Peter said: *“...Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust”* (1 Pet. 3:18; *hapax*).
 - (i) He will never suffer again!
 - (ii) His suffering on the cross totally exhausted the number of times he so suffered.
 - (d) The Hebrew writer said: *“It is appointed unto man once to die”* (Heb. 9:27; *hapax*).
 - (i) You and I only have to be worried about dying physically just one time!
 - (ii) My one physical death will totally exhaust the number of times I must die physically.
 - (iii) Thus, man’s appointment with death is summarized and finalized in that statement.
 - (2) So, when Jude said the faith was *“once for all”* delivered to the saints that argues for the fulness and completeness of divine truth in what God delivered.
 - (3) Since *“the faith”* was *“once for all delivered”* totally exhausts the number of times it will be delivered!
- C. ** Every system of religion based on the claim of latter day revelations is therefore false including Mormonism, Catholicism, Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Armstrongism and every other system of like nature.
- (1) They all have in common the notion that divine revelation was not once delivered.
 - (2) They all subscribe to the notion that, in some fashion or form, there is additional revelation, over and above, *“the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”*
 - (3) If the fulness of revelation occurred in the first century then all such claimants are proved to be false teachers, blind guides and deceitful workers (**Isa. 8:20**: *“If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”*).

Third, the faith once delivered to the saints is...

3. 7 An authoritative truth: “delivered”:

- A. When Jude says this faith was once *“delivered”* he emphasized the authoritative nature of this body of teaching.

- (1) In Titus 1:2-3 Paul said that “God, who cannot lie,...hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior.”
- (2) This has reference to the authoritative apostolic preaching, the kind which Paul did.
- B. There are three terms used in the New Testament to describe these men through whom this revelation came.
- (1) Ambassadors: Paul said, “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20).
- (a) It is a misuse of scripture to apply that statement to modern-day Christians.
 - (b) The term “ambassador” implies a commission, it suggests an official embassy and includes credentials to demonstrate the authority by which these ambassadors spoke.
 - (c) To receive an ambassador is to extend recognition of the power which sent them.
 - (d) Likewise, the rejection of an ambassador is to reject the power standing behind them.
 - (i) Jesus said to his apostles, “He that receiveth you receiveth me” (Matt. 10:40).
 - (ii) These men were sent forth to bind and loose what had already been bound in heaven (**Matt. 18:18**: “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” NASU).
 - (iii) Unto them Jesus said, “Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained” (Jn. 20:23).
 - (iv) Unto these ambassadors of heaven, the Lord gave the power to state divine law (delegated authority).
 - (v) The law did not originate with them for it was already settled in heaven; they simply made it known.
 - (e) Further, they were given credentials to show their official embassy in the miraculous powers they possessed.
 - (i) “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12).
 - (ii) The age of miracles belonged to the time of their ambassadorship.
 - (iii) During the time they were involved in this apostolic preaching, their credentials confirmed their word (God’s seal of approval):

Mk. 16:20: “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

Heb. 2:3-4: “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”
- (2) Earthen vessels:
- (a) In order to “deliver” “the faith,” Christ chose the earthen vessels of the apostles into whose hearts God shined the light of inspiration.

2 Cor. 4:6-7: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

- (b) The "earthen vessels" of this passage were those who had the light of divine inspiration and therefore does not relate to preachers other than those who originally "delivered" "the faith."
 - (c) Since the apostles had "the light" of divine knowledge, their message was authoritative and not to be rejected (**1 Cor. 14:37**: "...the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.>").
- (3) Witnesses:
- (a) Once I was on a jury; the most important evidence was the testimony of eye witnesses.
 - (i) Their testimony carried great weight with me because they were there and saw the incident in question.
 - (ii) I based my verdict primarily on their testimony.
 - (b) The "faith" was "delivered" by witnesses who saw the Lord, heard him speak, knew directly of his deeds and could speak as eye witnesses of his resurrection.
 - (i) The apostles were eye witnesses of Jesus (**Acts 1:8**: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.>").
 - (ii) Peter identifies himself as an eyewitness in **2 Pet. 1:16**: "We... were... eyewitnesses of his majesty."
 - (iii) That being the case, Peter was able to boldly and truthfully claim: **2 Pet. 1:16**: "... we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..."
 - (iv) John wrote: **1 Jn. 1:1-3**: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us — 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."
 - (v) Paul told King Agrippa that the special appearance of the Lord to him on the road to Damascus was to make him "a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16).
- C. The faith was "delivered" by chosen and empowered ambassadors who were vessels of earth into whose hearts the light of divine truth shone, and who were witnesses of the power and majesty of our Lord.
- (1) What they "delivered" therefore is authoritative and binding on earth even as it is bound in heaven (**Matt. 18:18**: "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." NASU).
 - (2) Indeed, what they "delivered" were "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Fourth, the faith once delivered to the saints has...

4. **8** Trustees of the truth: “the saints”: That’s us! **Jude 3**: “...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

A. Knowledge of the truth delivered and obedience to it made saints of them even as it does today (**1 Pet. 1:22**: “...you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...”).

(1) A saint is one made holy and consecrated to the Lord’s service.

(a) The word “saint” comes from the same root word as “holy” and means “set apart” (i.e., Vine: “used of believers, it designates all such and is not applied merely to persons of exceptional holiness, or to those who, having died, were characterized by exceptional acts of ‘saintliness.’”).

(b) Every baptized believer is a saint! **1 Cor. 1:2**; **2 Cor. 1:1**

(c) Every saint should cherish the truth which set him free and should seriously consider his obligation to guard that body of truth which made him free (**Jn. 8:32**).

(2) The faith is worth contending for!

(a) The word “contend” in **Jude 3** represents the most strenuous effort required of man.

(b) The word “contend” comes from the Greek word *epagonizomai* a strengthened form of *agonizomai* from which we get our English word “agonize” (Dictionary.com: “to make a desperate effort; struggle; strive”) It speaks of struggle, of intense effort.

(c) If “the faith” is not defended then “certain men” can creep in “unnoticed” and destroy “the faith” and rob us of the hope of salvation (e.g., **AD 70** heresy).

(d) When saints grow weary from the struggle and retire from the field of battle then the enemy shall take captive souls at his will.

(e) Whether we like it or not, we are in a battle! A warfare! **2 Cor. 10:3-5**: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”

(3) Today’s saints are deeply indebted to those who have gone before us who had to sort out truth from error and who, upon finding truth, contended for it with all their might.

☛ We owe it to “the faith” itself to contend for it.

☛ We owe it to ourselves.

☛ We owe it to our children and grandchildren.

☛ We owe it to our unsaved friends, neighbors, co-workers and loved ones.

☛ We owe it to generations yet unborn.

(4) What God delivered must be kept as he gave it: **Eph. 4:4-6**: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all,”

(5) Let us be constantly aware of the sly maneuvers of those who would slip into the flock, deny “the faith,” compromise with error and lead souls astray (**1 Cor. 16:13**: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong”).

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. What a blessing it is to have God's complete will at our fingertips!

1 Pet. 1:10-12: *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into."*

2. God has completely and finally revealed His will, and confirmed it with miracles, so each one of us can have the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life.
3. BUT, we must obey it! Heb. 5:8-9 Won't you obey Him today!

Adapted from an article, "The Faith Once Delivered To The Saints," by Connie W. Adams.