

Earnestly
CONTENDING
For
'THE FAITH'

*KEY TO "RECEIVING THE END OF YOUR FAITH, EVEN THE
SALVATION OF YOUR SOUL" 1PETER 1:9*

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“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” Jude 3

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”

Philippians 1:27(NKJV)

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INTRODUCTION

There is an old proverb that says, ‘It is wisdom to dance to the tune of the king and the tune of the king is the best tune’. Appreciating this proverb is not easy in our day because the power or authority of the king is now a thing of the past which people only read about in books. Anyone who understands the true nature of kings, will appreciate why it is wisdom to dance to the tune of the king no matter your status in the kingdom. In the olden days, kings could make and change laws at will, sometimes based on their mood or feelings; which makes not dancing to the tune of the king a very dangerous venture. In the Bible, we have an example of a queen who learnt this truth in a very hard way. The summary of the story is in Esther 1:10-12 which says, “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him”.

Using the parable, we can say that Queen Vashti refused to dance to the tune of the king and she incurred the wroth of the king. Now, it didn’t matter whether the tune of the king was right or wrong, what simply mattered was that, the king had a tune and not dancing to it made him very angry. And His anger will usually result in very serious consequences. In the case of Queen Vashti, let’s see the resulting consequence as recorded in Esther 1:19, “If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she”. Just to appease the king, though he was drunk at the time, his command became a new law by which the queen was deposed.

To dance to the king’s tune is simply to conform to his commands. Kings naturally do not tolerate or condone transgression of their commands. This nature of kings is actually a corruption of the nature of God as the true king of the universe. We can see this clearly in the fact that God always demand that we conform to His commands. The difference is that God’s tune

or command is really the best tune which makes it wisdom indeed to dance to it. And failure to dance to the tunes or commands of God means you are playing with falsehood or error. Now, generally speaking, transgressing the king's command amounts to elevating yourself above the authority of the king. That is why every transgression will attract the prescribed punishment. The worst part is that ignorance is never accepted as an excuse. That is why God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" Hosea 4:6. That makes it our responsibility, as His children, to search out His commands and conform to them. That is what 'Earnestly Contending for the Faith' is all about.

For several years now, well over sixty percent of my time is dedicated to reading or listening to gospel messages. This has become a way of life for me and people around me can attest to it. My major and most disturbing finding is that those who preach error are usually most persuasive. Such that if you have not through practice developed your senses to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 6:14) you will easily fall for their errors. That is why we are admonished, in the third verse of the single chapter book of Jude, to ensure that what we believe and practice is the true gospel as taught by Jesus and the founding apostles. "To fail in this is to yield to or accept a different or another gospel. A different or another gospel simply refers to the contaminated versions of the true gospel. Conforming to such gospel amounts to dancing to a tune that is contrary to that of our king which will lead to serious eternal consequences. Simply because, the true gospel makes us walk in the light of God but contaminated or polluted gospel keeps us walking in darkness. The Bible says, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" 1John 1:5-6. The key message of this scripture is "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all". That is, there is no room for a mixture of light and darkness with God. Thus, we are either walking in the light or in darkness and any gospel that condone a mixture of light and darkness is another gospel.

The sad reality of the church today is that we are confronted with a mixture of light and darkness and we seem to be satisfied with it. We are not

challenging the darkness because we are now so accustomed to it that we no longer see it as darkness. The danger and potency of deception is in the fact that those that are being deceived usually do not see the deception until it is all over. This is exactly what is happening to the church right now. The devil has succeeded in selling us a mixture of light and darkness but because we do not know it, we are confidently walking in it. Yet walking in darkness for whatever reason and in whatever form is totally unacceptable to God. We need to understand that walking in a mixture of light and darkness is the same as eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, let's understand that walking in darkness is not just about following idols or involvement in the occult. Every wrong doctrine amounts to walking in darkness because our walk is defined by the doctrines we accept.

If you understand this, you will begin to appreciate why we are warned severally to take heed to our doctrine. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” 1 Timothy 4:16. We can see that contrary to our general belief in the Christianity of today, our doctrine determines whether we shall be saved or not. Note that the scripture says, ‘continue in them’ which implies that you can begin in the correct doctrine and fall or depart from it. And according to that scripture, the doctrine we continue in will determine whether we shall be saved or not. That should swiftly bring to mind the scripture that says, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” Hebrews 10:39. Again, to draw back is to stop following Jesus and that is usually the result of departing from the doctrine of Christ by accepting and following other doctrines. That is why 2 John 9 warns that, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son”. Again, the key message of this scripture is that, ‘you do not have God if you fail or refuse to abide or continue in the doctrine of Christ’. And you do not have God is another way of saying you are back to darkness or you have accepted a mixture of light and darkness. That is what it means to draw back unto perdition. This is what makes the call to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints all the more critical today.

This is the reason this book has been written, we shall examine the exhortation to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. And explore two major components of the faith, which are the new birth and discipleship, as taught by Jesus and the founding apostles. For ease of presentation, the book has been split into four sections. In section one, we shall examine the exhortation to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. In section two, we shall explore the new birth by asking the question ‘Are You Really Born Again’ and looking at what it really means to be born-again. In section three, we shall explore discipleship with special emphasis on the conditions for discipleship. And finally, in section four, we shall begin to conclude by exploring the correlation between the demands that Jude 3 and Hebrews 11:6 puts on us. In other words, the correlation between earnestly contending for the faith and diligently seeking the Lord.

It is my earnest prayers that by the time you finish reading this book, you will be enlightened, motivated and empowered to begin to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. And to do it with such passion and zeal that you will be counted among those that are working out their salvation with fear and trembling. I pray that the Lord will anoint and fill you afresh with the Holy Spirit to enable you hear Him and receive His word as you read this book, in Jesus’ name.

SECTION ONE

EARNESTLY CONTENDING

FOR

THE FAITH

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”

Philippians 1:27(NKJV)

1



EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

“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” Jude 3. This is a very passionate exhortation that is not only relevant to us today but also very critical. If you read the whole of Brother Jude’s one chapter epistle which is addressed to all Christians, you will see that this exhortation in verse three nicely summarized his entire message. And the summary of the exhortation is simply that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

The major point to note in the exhortation is that we are not just exhorted to earnestly contend for the faith but that we earnestly contend for the one that was once delivered to the saints. That is, it is not enough to earnestly contend but that we must ensure that what we are earnestly contending for is the faith which was once delivered to the saints. It is critical that we understand what we are to earnestly contend for so that we will not run in the wrong direction. And that our efforts may not be in vain. Because, if you are running in the wrong direction, no matter how much speed you apply, you will never get to the destination. If we fail to take heed to this exhortation, we will end up running in the wrong direction without knowing it. To effectively discuss this exhortation, let’s break it into three parts as follows; ‘Earnestly contend’, ‘the faith’ and ‘once delivered to the saints’. We must take the three of them seriously if we are going to survive the times we are in and qualify to be chosen at the end. We must never forget the words of Jesus that says, “For many are called, but few are chosen” Matthew 22:14. To be among the chosen; we must understand and be committed to earnestly contending for the faith, we must understand ‘the faith’ and we must see the implication of ‘once

delivered to the saints'. Now, let's consider the three of them one after the other.

'EARNESTLY CONTEND'

You will agree with me that 'earnestly contend' are two powerful words that should get anyone's attention any day. We can actually further separate the two words into earnestly and contend to enable us appreciate the weight of the exhortation. According to the English Dictionary, the word earnestly can be substituted with the following words; sincerely, seriously, solemnly, intently, gravely, industriously, intensely and deeply. In summary, they all together indicate sincerely serious and intensely industrious effort. Another two words that describe earnestly are strenuous and diligent. We can say that to earnestly contend is to contend with strenuous diligence which shows the seriousness, weight or importance that should be attached to the contending. Strenuous on the other hand implies active, energetic, determined, spirited, tireless, persistent, vigorous and dogged. If you put all these together, you will begin to appreciate the demand that earnestly puts on us. It means in contending, we have to be active, energetic, determined, spirited, tireless, persistent, vigorous and dogged. Does it sound like how you are contending right now? That is, if you are actually contending at all. Sadly, many are not.

Now, let's look at the second word 'contending' which is actually the key action word in the exhortation. Again, according to the English Dictionary, the word contending can be substituted with contesting, opposing, challenging, struggling and resisting. Which means to be contending, you must be contesting, opposing, challenging, struggling and resisting. The word contending is defined as; to strive in opposition or to struggle or exert one's self to obtain or retain possession of. It also means to contest, dispute, vie, quarrel or fight, which simply means that contending involves opposition. There will be no contending if there is no opposition. Thus, admonishing us to earnestly contend for the faith puts a demand on us to strenuously strive as in opposition against whatever was not originally part of the faith. It involves contesting, opposing, challenging, struggling against and resisting any attempt to pollute, contaminate, remove or add to the faith. Note that it is our responsibility though it is to be achieved by the grace of God. When you put all these together you will see that earnestly contending demands our active effort and as such should not to be left to

chance. That is why Jesus said, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” Matthew 11:12. Luke 16:16 puts it like this, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it”. The sad thing today is that we are living the Christian life as if it is the kingdom that should press into us. That is why we must be reminded that it is our responsibility to press into the kingdom and we press in by earnestly contending for the faith. Strolling will not take anyone into the kingdom, you must press forcefully if you want to get in because the restrictions created by the opposition is great. Thus, to earnestly contend is the same as pressing into the kingdom or being forceful in the matters of the kingdom. The question is, are you applying force when it comes to the issue of entering the kingdom or are you strolling and hoping to get in at the end? Let’s wake up from our slumber!

‘THE FAITH’

The sad situation of the Christianity of today is that many are actually contending but not for ‘the faith’. In fact, many do not even know that there is ‘the faith’ that has a different meaning from the normal faith everyone knows. The reason is because all they have been taught about the gospel is just believe in Jesus. Consequently, some are contending very earnestly with the devil, demons and witches and wizards, while others are also seriously contending for success and prosperity or simply put a piece of the earth or a place in the world. In the process, they are neglecting the only thing we are exhorted to contend for according to Jude 3, which is ‘The Faith’. Generally speaking, ‘the faith’ simply refers to the entire system or body of truth or doctrines which adherents of any particular religion are expected to conform to. But for Christianity, it refers to the truths and doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ that will lead to the salvation of anyone who believe them. Note that I didn’t say ‘anyone who believes in Him’ because you do not really believe in Jesus if you do not believe in the words of the gospel. That is why the Bible says, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” Hebrews 4:1-2.

We need to understand that we are not called to believe in an imaginary man called Jesus but to believe in Jesus whose person is revealed in the words of the gospel. It is the word of God that reveals Him to us such that if you miss the word, you miss Him no matter how much you scream and shout His name. John 14:6 says, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”. In this scripture, Jesus gives us a very clear revelation of Himself. That means to believe in Jesus, is to know and believe in the way, the Truth and the life. Meaning to know Jesus, is to know the way, the truth and the life. To appreciate this revelation that Jesus gave of Himself in this scripture, let’s ask ourselves how or where do we obtain or find ‘the way’, ‘the truth’ and ‘the life’? Of course, they are only available in the word of God. That is why Psalm 119:105 says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”. Simply put, the word of God is the lamp and the light that puts us in the way and also keep us in His way. That is, it is by His word that He keeps us in His way and when you find the way, you have found Jesus. Again, John 8:31-32 says, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”. The summary is, truth is in the word. If you continue in the word, you have the truth, but if you neglect the word, you are neglecting the truth. The word is the source of the truth and it is only when you find truth that you find Jesus. Which means, to know Jesus is to know the truth and to have Jesus is to have the truth. Again, John 6:63 also says, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”. It is the word He speaks to us that is life; which means, until He speaks to you, you cannot have life though you are alive physically. That implies that the life referred to here is eternal life or the life of God. That means, eternal life or the life of God is in the word such that if you need it, you must get the word. That is why Jesus also said “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” Matthew 4:4. Thus the way, the truth and the life are all available to us only in the word that God speaks to us and they are who Jesus is. Therefore, we can say that ‘the faith’ we are admonished to earnestly contend for is the sincere doctrines of the gospel as delivered by Jesus Christ and the founding apostles that will result in the salvation of anyone who believe them. This means, it is

the doctrines of the gospel that is the power of God that saves us. That is why the Bible says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” Romans 1:16. That is, the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believe them. What you are expected to believe is not just the name Jesus but the gospel of Christ which we have said is simply the doctrines of Christ. That means, you don’t really know Jesus until you know His doctrines because they reveal His person and produce the power of God for our salvation.

Now, let’s stretch it little further, what does it really mean to believe in someone? I want you to meditate on this seriously because the answer to this simple question will illuminate what we have said about ‘the faith’ so far. And it may totally transform your mind set about Christianity. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16. This is the central message of the gospel and also the most abused simply because we do not really know what ‘believe in Him’ means. Understanding what it really means to believe in someone will show us the true meaning of ‘believe in Him’. Think about it, do we believe in people because of their looks, strength, capacity or position? The answer is obviously no. The answer to the question is really very simple, we believe in people simply because of what they say to us. Believing in people is never based on their looks, strength, capacity or position or importance but on their words. That is why some men can deceive women by simply saying the three magic words they want to hear so much, which is ‘I love you’. I hear people being counselled in church these days to just say ‘I love you’ to their wives whether they feel it or not. That is not correct, we should rather be teaching them to truly love their wives. We need to let husbands know that the Bible actually commands us to love our wives (especially if ‘she is not a good wife’ according to you). But even if she is actually a bad wife for whatever reason, loving her becomes the indicator of how much you are conforming to the word of God. Because the more you conform to the word of God, the easier it becomes for you to live in peace with anyone including a cantankerous wife or husband. It also shows the level of your relationship with God. In fact, he or she may be the means by which God seeks to perfect you in the Christian walk. It means, they should actually

become the parameter for measuring our growth in the Lord. That is why you shouldn't be in a haste to divorce or separate from that sister or brother that is your wife or husband without giving Jesus enough time to straighten things out. Most times, the enough time depends on how long it takes us to cooperate with Jesus. Moreover, we should never forget that it is part of our calling as Christians to pursue peace with everyone. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" Hebrews 12:14 (NKJV). Psalm 34:14 also says, "Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it". This understanding has help me in my relationship with people, such that people often ask me how I cope with certain people in my life. That was a digression but I pray it helps someone as it has helped me, in Jesus' name.

Back to our question, the truth is, you can never believe in someone who has not spoken to you verbally, written or by body language. That is why you can believe in someone you have been speaking with, whom you have never seen or met in person and yet you don't believe in the multitudes you have contact with daily. In recent times, we have seen examples of this with Internet fraudsters. Many have lost their lives or resources by believing people they only communicated with online who they didn't know were telling them lies. With these, it should be very clear that we believe in people because of their words which should normally represent their person if they are telling the truth. The same applies to our call to believe in Jesus. When John 3:16 says, 'whoever believes in Him shall not perish', we need to understand that it is referring to our believing in Him based on what He has said to us that represents His person. This is why we can believe in Him without seeing Him as scripture says in 1 Peter 1:7-8, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory". Therefore, 'the faith' as used in Jude 3 means all that Jesus has said to us that we must believe in order to be said to 'believe in Him'. Which is usually referred to in scriptures as the doctrine of Christ or the doctrines of God."Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the

doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” Titus 2:9-10. This scripture particularly addresses servants but it is invariably applicable to everyone who is in Christ. The summary is that, we should adorn the doctrine of God, which simply means to put on or conform to the doctrine of God. Note that it is referred to as ‘the doctrine of God our Saviour’ which we can say is the doctrine of Christ in line with 2 John 9. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” 2 John 9. Therefore whether it is called the doctrine of God or of Christ, it is referring to the doctrine of Christ because Jesus is the revelation of God.

We can also generalize this truth because the same applies to spirits. To believe in spirits is also simply to accept what they say. There is need to understand that the devil also has his own doctrines and scriptures warn us against it. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” 1 Timothy 4:1. Note that this does not only say there are doctrines of devils but that many will depart from ‘the faith’ by giving heed to them or by accepting them. Also note that what they are departing from is also referred to as ‘the faith’ which as we have seen refers to the doctrines of Christ. Thus, the scripture is saying, ‘the Spirit expressly says that many will depart from the doctrines of Christ by accepting the doctrines of devils through the activities of seducing spirits’. And whether we understand it or not, we are daily confronted with the doctrines of devils as we walk with God. What makes the doctrine of devils dangerous is the fact that they are simply the corrupted, adulterated, polluted or contaminated versions of the doctrines of Christ. That is, they don’t have any other doctrine of their own, they simply corrupt, adulterate, pollute or contaminate the doctrines of Christ. And the potency of their doctrines is in their capacity to subtly make us comfortable to continue in the flesh though we are in Christ. The devil knows that all he needed to do to keep us under condemnation though we are in Christ is simply to make us continue to walk in the flesh. That is why the Bible says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” Romans 8:1. Note that the reason we are still under condemnation if we continue in the flesh is because, according to Romans 8:4, the righteousness of the law will not be fulfilled in us. “That the righteousness

of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” Romans 8:4. That is why any interpretation of the scriptures that makes you comfortable in the flesh must be resisted because it is the doctrine of devils.

Now, to further emphasize our point, let’s understand that just as we believe and accept people by their words, so also we disbelieve and reject people by their words. If someone keeps saying what is not agreeable with you, you will naturally stop listening to him and begin to reject his person. And if care is not taken, you will start to hate him. It is even worse when it has to do with spiritual matters. Let’s use the Israelites dealings with Jesus as example. The question is, why did they really crucify Him? It was simply because of His teachings or doctrines that were contrary to theirs. I am very sure if Jesus had come doing the miracles He did and teaching their own version of theology, they would have gladly accepted Him as the messiah. But, His teachings, which did not go down well with them made them reject Him in spite of all the miracles they saw Him do.

Let’s see some examples of His encounter with them starting with chapter ten of the gospel according to John. You can read the whole chapter to get the whole picture but let’s see Verses 30-33. “I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” John 10:30-33. Jesus had several of this kind of experience with the Jews that are documented in the gospels. If you understand the Jews, you will know that picking up stones against you is the sure sign that you have been rejected and no going back. Notice that when Jesus asked them why, they made it clear that they were not rejecting Him because of His miracles but because of His doctrines. In this particular instance they accused Him of blasphemy because He said Himself and the Father are one.

Again, let’s see another one in the eighth chapter of John. Once again, you can read the entire chapter to get the whole picture. But let’s see the summary in verses 57-59. It says, “Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones

to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” John 8:57-59. You can see again that the basis of rejection was His teachings. Let’s see yet another example but this time in the book of Luke. Again, the summary is in Luke 4:16-30 which says, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph’s son? And he said unto them, ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way” Luke 4:16-30

Now, what was His offence this time? It was also His teaching or message. We see this in Verse 28 which says, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath”. All of them that were in the synagogue who heard His teaching were filled with wrath. We can go on and on but let’s see one more in the sixth chapter of the book of John. Once again to get the full picture you need to read the whole chapter but I will just

take the summary in verses 51-60. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” John 6:51-60. This time around those involved are referred to as disciples may be that is why they were a little more lenient but they still rejected Him and stopped following Him. See verse 66, it says, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him”.

With all these, it should be clear to us that to believe in Jesus is not about believing in a man called Jesus sitting in heaven but to believe in His teachings which Jude 3 simply refers to as ‘the faith’. That means you accept Him by believing in His teachings and you reject Him by not believing in His teachings. The proof that you believe is you doing what He said. And to reject Him is simply to accept the doctrine of devils, just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. There is no vacuum you either believe Him through His teaching or you will believe the devil through the doctrine of devils. That means you either believe in Jesus and do what He says rejecting what the devil says, or you believe in the devil and do what he says, rejecting what Jesus said. The sad part is that, God will not force you because He expects you to choose what you do by your free will. That is why it is essential that we understand that it is our responsibility to earnestly contend for ‘the faith’ by resisting or striving against every form of corruption, adulteration, pollution or contamination. You can only do that when you know “the faith’ or doctrine of Christ in truth.

Therefore, anytime you come across the phrase ‘the faith’ in scriptures, be careful to see it in its proper context because it is either talking about believe or what to believe as in the doctrines of Christ. Let’s see some other examples of ‘the faith’ that refers to the doctrines of Christ; Acts 6:7 says, “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”. The faith here refers to the doctrines of Christ. Which means this scripture is saying a great company of the priests were obedient to the doctrines of Christ. Acts 14:21-22 also says, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in *the faith*, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”. Again the faith here also refers to the doctrine that was preached to them. Romans 1:3-5 also says, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to *the faith* among all nations, for his name”. Every time you see obedience before ‘the faith’, understand that it is referring to the doctrines of Christ. Thus, according to this scripture, the grace of God is to enable obedience to the doctrines of Christ. Note that it says ‘grace and apostleship’ which means the role of the apostles is primarily to enable people obey the doctrine of Christ. We can go on and on but let’s see two more. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from *the faith*, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”. Again, any time you see erred before ‘the faith’ understand that it is referring to the doctrines of Christ. Therefore, this scripture is saying coveting after money can make you to err or derail or wander away from the doctrines of Christ. Lastly, Titus 1:13 also says, “This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith”. Again, ‘sound in faith’ here simply means ‘sound in the doctrines of Christ’. We will stop here but I encourage you to search out the rest of such scriptures and analyze them for yourself. This brings us to the last of the three separate combination of words from the exhortation which is ‘once delivered to the saints’.

‘ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS’

This phrase ‘once delivered to the saints’ is very critical to the exhortation. If you miss it, you would have missed a very vital part of the exhortation. The first point to note is that it is past tense. And the first part ‘once delivered’ shows that it is not expected to be changed or altered anymore. But to remain as once delivered to us from the Godhead through Jesus and the founding apostles by the working of the Holy Spirit. That is why Apostle Paul says, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” Ephesians 2:19-20. The foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief corner stone simply refers to ‘the faith’, the teachings or doctrines of Jesus or the gospel truth as documented in scriptures which is no longer subject to change. That is why Apostle Paul also says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 3:11. Jesus as foundation here simply refers to His teachings or doctrines.

If you understand this, you will begin to appreciate Hebrews 1:1-2 which says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”. Note that it didn’t say He is speaking to us but that He has spoken to us by His Son (The Living Word). Meaning the gospel is a completed message from God that is no longer open to changes or additions, rather we shall be saved as we by revelation receive the word of God by the gospel as documented in the Bible. That is why the Bible says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” 1Peter 1:23-25. By this scripture, we understand that the gospel is not just good news of Jesus died and rose again; rather, the gospel is the word of God. That is, it is the word of God that is preached through the gospel. That is why we have said that the gospel is a completed message from God that is no longer open to changes, additions or subtractions,

which is what Jude 3 means by ‘once delivered to the saints’.

Now, when we combine the detailed explanation of the three separate combination of words from the exhortation, we should begin to appreciate why we ought to be committed to earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Which translate to opposing all forms of corruption, pollution, or contamination of the gospel through addition, subtraction or twisting of the word of God. The overall implication is that, it is our duty as Christians to earnestly contend for that pure and uncorrupted version of the faith or as we have seen, the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ transmitted through the founding apostles.

REASON FOR THE EXHORTATION

To appreciate the seriousness of the exhortation there is need to explore the reason Jude gave for the exhortation. First, let’s remember that the exhortation was first directed at the early church. And if there was need to exhort them to earnestly contend in their day and time, then we need to be seriously concerned because the need would have multiplied several folds in our day and time. This is simply because the situations and circumstances that led to the exhortation have definitely increased several folds since then. We are living in the days referred to in scriptures as ‘end times’, the time when all the negative declarations or prophecies which had started showing up in their days were to fully manifest. Therefore, we can conveniently say that Jude’s exhortation is much more relevant now than at any other period of the church age. In the same way, if the reason Jude gave at that time was just visible, it would be very obvious and much more glaring among us today.

Now, Jude’s reason is clearly stated in verse 4 which says, “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” Jude 4. The first point here is that it is men. The second point is that they will creep in on the church unnoticed. That is, the church will not recognize the entrance of the men and the doctrinal errors they will introduce. The third point is that they are ungodly men though they will be called men of God. The fourth point is, their condemnation was ordained of old. Their condemnation refers to the judgment or punishment that awaits such people. That is, their judgment was

predetermined, not their action which was entirely their choice. The fifth point is, they will turn the grace of God into license to live the way they liked conforming to the world instead of the Lord.

Therefore, the main reason we are to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered is the corruption or adulterations that will be introduced by error or falsehood of men. ‘By error’ refers to those who are genuinely called of God but allowed themselves to be deceived into accepting corruption or adulteration of the gospel. While ‘by falsehood’ refers to those who are agents of the devil (knowingly or unknowingly) that deliberately corrupt or adulterate the gospel to deceive and lead people astray or for their own personal gain. The sad part is that the Holy Spirit actually warned that this will happen and says clearly that people will depart from the faith. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” 1 Timothy 4:1. Note that, as we said previously, to depart from the faith means to depart from the doctrines of Christ. That is, to follow seducing spirits and the doctrines of devils instead of the Holy Spirit and the doctrines of Christ. We are already in the latter times referred to in this scripture and many are already carelessly or unknowingly following seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. And these things had already started happening in the days of the apostles which is why they warned us severally against them.

Furthermore, let’s understand that the attempts to corrupt the gospel actually started at the very beginning such that the apostles had to indicate that such instructions were not from them. We can see an example of this in Acts 15:24, “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment”. You can see that attempts to change the gospel are almost as old as the gospel itself. Apostle Paul referred to it as another gospel and went ahead to place a curse on those preaching it. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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” Galatians 1:6-8. Apostle Peter also warned saying, “But there were

false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” 2 Peter 2:1. Notice again that he says, there shall be false teachers among us who will secretly introduce wrong doctrines, to the extent that they will even deny the Lord not just by words but also by their actions and life.

In spite of all these warnings, the church has over the years allowed men, who were direct agents of Satan and those who through ignorance were used by Satan, to introduce unauthorized changes to the doctrines of Jesus. And with time, such changes have become accepted as normal by those who do not know nor care about their source. And the more they were practiced, the more acceptable they became. One of the major consequence or effect of the changes is the loss of desire or passion to contend for the faith or to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And the result generally is ignorance, negligence and carelessness. The Bible says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” 2 Corinthians 13:5. Note that we are expected to examine ourselves whether we are in ‘the faith’. Again, it is not saying examine whether you have faith but whether you are in ‘the faith’, that is ‘the doctrines of Christ’. Self-examination is critical in the times and days we are living in because it will help us not to fall ignorantly into the doctrines of devils or not to continue ignorantly in them.

The truth is, if we are going to survive the end times or the evil days, we must give priority attention to working out our salvation with fear and trembling by earnestly contending for the faith that was once delivered by Jesus and the founding apostles. The Bible says, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” Ephesians 4:14. The sad reality of today’s Christianity is that we are now accommodating every wind of doctrine instead of contending with them. We see them as new revelations and therefore willingly conform to them. How can you contend with what you accept and readily conform to? It is impossible! Whether we believe it or not, men who will be known as men of God, will rise up amongst us and make themselves available to be used to deceive us. That is why we should never accept everything men of God teach

us without confirming them for ourselves, because it will amount to rejecting the warnings of scriptures. Sadly, by the doctrines of today, Christians are being caged into continuing as children or remaining babes in Christ. As long as we remain children, we cannot earnestly contend for the faith because as children we do not have the capacity to resist the winds of doctrines by deceitful men and demons including careless servants of God. The most dangerous is the careless servants of God who submit to the doctrine of devils, because they are the ones that make many let down their guard since they see them as true men of God. We need to be reminded that it is our responsibility to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. God will hold each of us accountable for allowing every wind of doctrine to deceive us.

In concluding this chapter, we need to emphasize that it is only ‘the faith’ which was once delivered to the saints that can enable us develop faith in Jesus Christ for our eventual salvation. This is the most critical statement so far and I pray you will not miss it. Let me try to rephrase it, it is only ‘the faith which was once delivered to the saints’ which we said is the teachings of Jesus passed down through the founding apostles, that can enable us develop the real faith in Jesus for our eventual salvation. This should not be difficult to comprehend because the Bible says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word. All we have simply added is that the word of God from which faith comes is the doctrines of Christ which was once handed down to us through the founding Apostles. That makes earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints very critical to our developing faith in Christ because it will eventually determine whether we shall be saved or not. Again, this should not be difficult to understand when we remember that the exhortation of Jude was actually in respect of our salvation. See how he started the exhortation ‘Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation’. Thus, the reason He was so forceful is because it has to do with our salvation. That is, he considered it a life or death matter. Therefore, I admonish you to take these things seriously because how you handle them will determine whether you will be saved or not or whether you will be among the chosen or not.