

THE FAITH

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

1. Jude had planned to write a treatise on “our common salvation” but a more necessary, urgent need arose that compelled him to write this short epistle: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). As we continue to read through the epistle, we learn that it was because of “certain men” who had crept in among the brethren and were turning “the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:4).



2. In this lesson we shall focus on three important truths from verse three, which serve as the outline for this lesson:

- I. “The Faith” Is A System Of Belief Based On Real Precepts
- II. “The Faith” Has Been Once For All Delivered To The Saints
- III. “The Faith” Must Be Earnestly Defended

3. After considering these points we shall make some brief applications.

I. “THE FAITH” IS A SYSTEM OF BELIEF BASED ON REAL PRECEPTS

- A. The Greek words *tē pistei* translate as “The faith”. This refers to objective faith, the body of truth that produces faith. The faith is “the sum of that which Christians believe” (Alford GNT). Arndt and Gingrich say it is “That which is believed, body of faith or belief, doctrine.”

“The faith” is a system of belief based on real precepts given to the world by God through Christ and the Holy Spirit - Carey Dillinger.

- B. We can see “faith” referred to objectively in the following places, too:

1. Paul wrote, “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for **the faith** which would afterward be **revealed**” (Galatians 3:23). This is “the faith” that was “revealed”.
2. Luke wrote, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were **obedient to the faith**” (Acts 6:7). We can see that “the faith”, the gospel, includes commands that must be obeyed.
3. Paul wrote, “Watch, **stand fast in the faith**, be brave, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to “stand fast” (to persevere and persist in) “the faith”, i.e., the system of belief that was once for all delivered to the saints.

II. “THE FAITH” HAS BEEN ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

- A. Jude says that the faith has been “once for all delivered to the saints”. Thayer says of “once for all” (*hapax*) that it is “used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never need repetition”. The ERV version renders *hapax paradotheisēi* as “God gave this faith once, and it is good for all time”, which accurately expresses the sense. It is vitally important to understand what the Greek word *hapax* (once) means, and so let us consider the following verses where the word *hapax* appears:

1. The Hebrew writer says of Christ, “...but now, **once** at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26).
2. The Hebrew writer says, “So Christ was offered **once** to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28).
3. Peter says, “For Christ also suffered **once** for sins” (1 Peter 3:18).

- B. The word “delivered” is from the Greek word *paradidōmi* of which Thayer says, “To deliver verbally”, and the CWSD says it is “spoken of things delivered orally or by writing”.
1. The content of “the faith” or the gospel was given at a point in the past and having been communicated does not have to be repeated to be binding on people (Clinton D. Hamilton).
 2. God's revelation was delivered once as a unit, at the completion of the Scripture, and is not to be edited by either deletion or addition (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). Scripture is complete, sufficient, and finished; therefore it is fixed for all time. Nothing is to be added to the body of the inspired Word because nothing else is needed. It is the responsibility of believers now to study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2), and fight for its preservation (MacArthur Bible Commentary).
- C. The faith or system of belief was not discovered by men but delivered by God through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Galatians 1:11), not to the world, but to “the saints” (an expression that refers to the body of believers). The faith that God has delivered is intended, not for a select group of saints, but *all* the saints.

III. “THE FAITH” MUST BE EARNESTLY DEFENDED

- A. Since the faith was delivered to *all* the saints, it is each Christian’s responsibility to “earnestly contend” for it.
1. The Greek word *epagōnizomai* is a compound of *epi*, “upon or about”, intensive, *agon*, “a contest” (Vine). “*Agonizomai* is used several times in the NT. It is translated contend, fight, strive against opposition, or agonize in a contest. Jude used *epagonizomai* to emphasize the need for spiritual advancing believers to **contend with feverous agony** for the faith” (Ron Adema). It was a verb used to describe the vigorous and intense training of athletes.
 2. The idea, then, is that Christians ought to be prepared to defend the doctrines of Christianity. Whenever and wherever false doctrine rears its head, a Christian must be ready to refute it with the truth. David Collins writes, “A young Christian lady I know has a Muslim friend, and while they rarely discuss their respective faiths, her friend does occasionally state that Allah is the one true God. ‘How do you respond to that error?’ I asked. ‘Oh, I don’t say anything; she has her faith and I have mine and neither of us is going to change, so it’s not worth saying anything, you know.’ This young Christian lady has no understanding and no conviction; she would rather keep the truth suppressed than refute her error for the sake of maintaining the friendship” (Thoughts On Various Topics).
- B. The particular occasion for defending the faith is stated by Jude: “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:4; cp. 2 Timothy 4:14-15).



Applications

1. When we speak of “the faith” we mean the body of revealed truth - the word of God - that produces subjective faith (cp. Romans 10:17). It is this body of revealed truth that contains all we need to live a life pleasing to God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; cp. 2 Corinthians 5:9): it reveals the true and living God, the origin of the universe and all that is in it, including man, God’s plan of redemption, the organisation, worship, and work of the church, etc.
 - a. The onus is on each one of us to be filled with a knowledge and understanding of God’s word. Paul puts it this way: “...be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18) and “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16).
 - b. This, of course, means we must set aside the time and make the effort to read and study the scriptures, and, to do so in a profitable manner, which means we must learn *how* to study. Peter says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).
 - c. Those that do not study the scriptures are not in a position to “earnestly contend for the faith”.

2. We are obliged to “earnestly contend for the faith”.¹ Our obligation to earnestly contend for “the faith” means...
- We must teach it. Jesus declared that our mission is to preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). How sobering is the truth that all people who are separated from Christ are without hope in this world (Ephesians 2:12). We are debtors (cp. Romans 1:14), i.e., we labor under a divine obligation, to see that all men have the opportunity to know of the Lord’s saving grace as made available through his plan of redemption. How sorely the church has neglected this sacred duty.
 - Christians are under obligation to conduct their lives consistent with the principles of the New Testament system. “Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,” admonished Paul (Philippians 1:27). The apostle was quite conscientious that he might not do anything which would be a hindrance to the religion of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 9:12) - even in matters of judgment. When the world observes children of God, the Lord should be magnified, not distorted (Philippians 1:20).
 - We must also be prepared and willing to defend the faith. Paul acknowledged that through the providence of God he had been sent to Rome in chains that he might be allowed to defend the gospel (Philippians 1:16). While no normal person seeks a constant climate of controversy, every realistic soldier of the cross is keenly aware of the fact that spiritual battle cannot be avoided if one stands for truth and against error. Whenever the faith is assaulted, either from without or from within the body of Christ, faithful men and women must firmly rise up and contend for the truth. We must not allow the heat of battle to fall upon a few; everyone must attempt to do his or her part. “Shall I be carried to the skies, on beds of flowery ease; while others fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas?”
3. The faith has been “once for all delivered”. There could be no clearer way to state this truth – the faith has been “once for all delivered”. Yet how many false prophets have arisen, claiming to have further revelation (Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddie, etc)? This one verse – if understood and heeded – will aid us in instantly recognising many of today’s false prophets, because as soon as they claim to have any further revelation from God, we can be assured that they are lying.

Copyright©DavidCambridge2015

¹ The following points are taken from an article by Wayne Jackson. See www.christiancourier.com/articles/40-contend-earnestly-for-the-faith

True Faith Goes Beyond Assent

“Faith must have adequate evidence, else it is mere superstition” (Archibald Hodge) Too many religious people have a faith that is indeed mere superstition - a faith that they say is “better felt than told.” True faith in Christ must be a kind of faith that can be shared with our fellowman. The following is a partial list of characteristics of “the faith.” A thorough study of this list is beyond the scope of this article, but the scriptures have been provided so that you might continue the study on your own.

Characteristics of “The Faith”

The faith can be preached (Galatians 1:23; Acts 24:24).

The faith can be obeyed (Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5; 16:26).

We must continue in the faith (Acts 14:22; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Colossians 1:23).

Churches can be strengthened in the faith (Acts 16:5).

True Christians must be proven by the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Christians can be established in the faith (Colossians 2:7).

The faith possesses unity (Ephesians 4:13).

Christians must strive together in the faith (Philippians 1:27).

We must be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).

Love can found among those in the faith (Titus 3:15).

The faith is not to be held with partiality (James 2:1).

We must earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 1:3).

The faith was once for all delivered (Jude 1:3).

Some will depart from the faith (1 Timothy 1:19; 4:1).

Some will try to turn others away from the faith (Acts 13:8).

The faith can be denied (1 Timothy 5:8).

Love of money and false knowledge can cause one to stray from the faith (1 Timothy 6:10, 21; 2 Timothy 2:18).

Only one thing possesses all these characteristics - The Gospel of Christ! This “Good News” concerning Jesus Christ can only be found in God’s Word. It is therefore in God’s word that we can come in direct contact with “the faith.”

Carey Dillinger

www.bible.ca/ef/expository-2-peter-1-1b.htm