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“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” II Timothy 4:7.

A Review of Doctrines We Believe

Lesson Aim: To effect greater determination in defending the faith by a review of the Doctrinal Statement.

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INTRODUCTION—It has been an interesting journey, hasn't it? For thirteen weeks the study has centered in Bible doctrine. As a guide we have followed the doctrinal statement adopted by the churches composing the Baptist Missionary Association of America. And we have seen how the Bible positively teaches each doctrine we hold.

Perhaps you know more about Bible doctrine than before this series of studies began. If so, you are more responsible to God than you were before. You are responsible to believe these truths, to defend them, and to propagate them.

From henceforth your challenge is: **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,”** I Peter 3:15. This means that you should, **“. . . earnestly contend for the faith which once delivered unto the saints,”** Jude 3.

Why is loyalty to Bible doctrine important? Because perilous days are coming upon the earth. Apostate religious systems are growing and their doctrines will pervert the truth and turn men into hell. Baptists are being more and more pressured to desert their faith. But the worse conditions become on earth the greater will be the need for Bible-believing Christians to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus. We must hold the truth as it is in Him.

Today's study aims “to effect greater determination in defending the faith.” The comments which follow will discuss the character of those who believe the Bible, of those who do not believe it, and some of the basic

truths we must hold beyond all costs. If you will read with prayer, you will read with profit.

EXPOSITION

I. WE WHO BELIEVE, Jude 1-3.

1. Believers benefit from a divine activity, verse 1. We are believers because God has called us, sanctified us, and preserved us in Jesus Christ. The calling has to do with salvation: **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. . .”** John 6:44. The sanctifying is God's work of setting us apart unto Himself as His “peculiar people,” Titus 2:14; I Peter 2:9. The preserving work is God's grace keeping secure those who trust Jesus, II Timothy 4:18.

Since we are believers through divine activity in our behalf, not by our own merits, we have no occasion to boast. Rather, we can all say with the Apostle Paul, **“By the grace of God I am what I am,”** I Corinthians 15:10.

2. Believers are recipients of divine mercy, verse 2. Mercy and peace are often joint in Biblical terminology. (See I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; II John 3 as well as Jude 2.) They always come in this order: first mercy, then peace. This is the way they are experienced. The mercy of God brings peace with God and thus the peace of God can abide in the heart.

In mercy, God revealed the truths which we now hold as doctrinal verities. In mercy, He applied the truths to our hearts in redemption and sanctification. In mercy, He will perform every promise and execute every principle of righteousness which He has revealed. Believers are recipients of His mercy.

3. Believers are redeemed by divine agency, verse 3. They share in a “common salvation.” “Common” does not mean “below ordinary; inferior; having no rank” but rather means “shared by all; belonging equally to two or more.” The “common salvation” is, therefore, the salvation which is my experience and yours also. It is a salvation which we both share.

To be “saved” means “to be made safe.” To have “salvation” means “to have already been made safe and to remain in a state of safety.” Jesus is the Saviour. The basis of salvation is His shed blood made effective to us by the Holy Spirit. Our part is repentance (turning from sin) and faith (trusting Him). We take; He undertakes. And the believer receives eternal salvation because of what God does. Eternal salvation and eternal security means the same thing. God makes us safe.

4. Believers are to contend for divine truth, verse. 3. **“Earnestly**

contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” A brief word study will be profitable at this point. “Earnestly contend” is the translation of the Greek word from which we get the term “agonize.” It pictures the athlete running against contestants in gymnastic games. It means “to endeavor with strenuous zeal; to strive; to struggle; to fight; to contend with adversaries.” And a prefix on the word used by Jude means to do this with double effort. It calls for utmost exertion in defense of the faith. For everywhere the word carries the idea of resisting opponents in the contest.

The point of contention is “the faith.” This term could mean either personal trust or that which is believed. It has the latter meaning here. God has revealed truth. We have that truth in a system of doctrine called “the faith.” Now, defend and propagate that doctrine in spite of any or all adversaries.

The enduring quality of the faith is indicated in it being a “once delivered to the saints” kind of faith. The very grammatical form used declares it has been “once-for-all-time” delivered. There will be no change or vanishing of the truth revealed. Hold it. It is eternal truth. Share it. It speaks of eternal things.

The faith has been delivered “to the saints.” In the New Testament anyone who is trusting Jesus is a saint. The term is nowhere applied to a person to designate superior holiness. Neither is it applied to a person who is dead. It refers to the believers in Christ Jesus who are living. They have received the truth. They are to defend it. They are to propagate it. They are responsible to God for what they do with what they have.

II. THOSE WHO BELIEVE NOT, Jude 4-25.

1. Unbelievers have entered into the Christian community, verse 43. **“For there are certain men crept in unawares. . .”** Some get into the church who do not believe the truth of God. This is still tragic but true. They do not come in openly parading their infidelity and unbelief. They are “brought in privily to spy out our liberly which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage,” Galatians 2:4. Such false teachers will “privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,” II Peter 2:1.

From these scripture passages several truths are evident. First, heretics enter the company of believers rather than stay outside. Second, they always enter in such a way that their true nature is not known until they are settled and accepted among believers. Third, there is an element of deceitfulness in the way they enter and in the way they promote their pernicious doctrines.

Fourth, they go to great extremes in denying the faith even to the point of denying the Lord Jesus Himself. Fifth, they must be contested, resisted, overcome and cast out.

2. Unbelievers have a false doctrine which works great harm, verses 4, 8-9. They “turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.” They define the flesh. They despise authority. They even deny the Lord Jesus.

Such wantonness, general license, and horrible licentiousness must not be permitted to exist in the Christian fellowship. These must be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, I Corinthians 5:5. They must not be permitted to share in the communion of those who know and love Jesus.

The requirement sounds hard and even harsh, but the consequences are so serious that they demand stern action. The Biblical principle is expressed by the Apostle Paul, **“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed,”** Galatians 1:9.

3. Unbelievers are certainly headed for judgment, verses 5.7. Jude underscores the certainty of divine judgment upon those who pervert the gospel by giving three illustrations from religious history. (1) God destroyed some who came out of Egypt in the great Hebrew exodus because they did not believe. (2) God is holding certain angels in the everlasting chains of darkness awaiting the judgment because they left their first estate. (3) God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, as an example to others, because of their wickedness. Why should sinners today expect to escape?

It is interesting to compare Jude's writings with II Peter 2:1-22. Peter also mentions three instances of divine judgment: angels, the world of Noah's day, Sodom and Gomorrah. He comes to the same conclusion as Jude that false teachers today will receive a like judgment and not one will escape.

4. Unbelievers follow a depraved course, verses 10-25. The course of false teachers is after the nature of their lives. They defile others because they are corrupt. They are destitute of the Spirit and so cannot comprehend spiritual things. Their words are learned and pretentious which appeal to the flesh. They pretend to deliver their followers from bondage of ignorance while they are servants of corruption. Unsaved pretenders of faith run after them.

The Bible repeatedly warns of the rise of false teachers in the last times. One familiar passage states, **“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,”** II Timothy 3:13. The nearer the end comes the worse it will be.

What is the believer to do under these circumstances? (1) **“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned. . .”** II Timothy 3:14.

(2) Keep on "building up yourselves on your most holy faith," Jude 20. (3) Keep on "praying in the Holy Spirit," Jude 20. (4) "Keep yourselves in the love of God," Jude 21. (5) Keep an evangelistic spirit—"others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," Jude 23. (6) Keep on "earnestly contending for the faith once-for-all delivered unto the Saints," Jude 3.

God expects every man to be true to the revealed Word. But if no man is true, God expects you to be. Can He depend on you?

III. WHAT WE BELIEVE

The last twelve lessons have surveyed many of the doctrines which Baptists believe. Your own church has subscribed to this doctrinal statement. That is why she is using this literature.

Look back over these lessons and observe what has been said about God, His Word, creation, Satan, sin, the fall of man, salvation, the church, stewardship, missions, the second coming of Christ, resurrection, and eternal destiny.

These are blessed doctrinal truths. They are Bible truths. They are truths which God Himself has revealed. They are truths given for our profit and spiritual safety. They are truths which no man has the right to change nor challenge. They are to be believed, preserved, and propagated throughout the world.

Because we thus believe, we stress the importance of the local church; the priesthood of the believer; the sufficiency of the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice; a regenerate church membership; the sovereignty of God; and kindred doctrines.

Do you know what Baptists believe? This quarter of study has sought to help you understand. Ask your pastor for some pamphlet or booklet which will help you understand further. He will be pleased to aid you.

But there is one book on Baptist doctrine which is more helpful than all other books. That book is the Bible. Baptist Doctrine is Bible Doctrine! If you want to know what Baptists believe then stay close to your Bible. That's their textbook. And where could a better guide to faith and practice be found?

CONCLUSION—"I must be a better Christian than ever before." This would be a fitting response to today's lesson. Have you found an inspiration to renewed loyalty from this study?

Perilous days are rapidly coming upon the earth. Some people are saying that in five years the United States will be under an absolute

dictatorship or will witness one of the bloodiest revolutions ever seen among men.

Growing unity in apostate Christendom threatens true faith. It is possible that Baptists will once again undergo persecution for their faith as their forefathers did. More and more pressure will be exerted to get Baptists to leave their Biblically based faith. Our people must be ready to “give an answer” to those who challenge them.

But today we have freedom to witness and win. What evangelists we should be today! What missionary concern should possess our churches! What stewardship in teaching should mark our curriculum today.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist steadfast in the faith. . .” I Peter 5:8-9.

QUESTIONS

1. What is “the faith”?
2. What has this series of studies had to do with “the faith”?
3. In what sense is Jude 3 the key to today's lesson?