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THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO "CONTEND FOR THE FAITH"

by Steve Miller

We are able to know when people depart from the faith and go into error. *"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6)*. We are exhorted to *"try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1)*. We are commanded to refuse to bid false teachers and the apostates of the one faith "God speed" (2 John 9-11).

Compromising with the devil, fellowshipping false doctrine, false teachers, apostate congregations, denominations, and rejecting the authority of the Scriptures, have led to the extreme liberalism that exists in the body of Christ today.

We are facing a similar situation in the church today that our brethren faced over a hundred years ago. It is true that "history repeats itself." We should pay close attention to history and learn as much as we can from it.

"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).

Jude urged strongly that the brethren *"contend for the faith."* The problem of false teachers necessitated the urgency of this admonition (Jude 4). Jude reveals that *"certain men crept in unawares."* This parallels the words of Jesus, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15; Cf. Acts 20:28; 2 Pet. 2:1,2)*.

Members of the body of Christ have been exhorted to contend, defend, uphold, preach, teach, and live the Word of God. In the past, children of God were not afraid to stand up to false teachers and false doctrine and expose the corruptness of such. The Bible is full of examples of Godly men defending the will of God.

PROPHETS

The Bible gives us many examples of prophets, apostles, and faithful disciples of God who defended the will of God that was revealed to man. Let us notice these examples of men speaking God's message. The prophet Isaiah rebuked Judah for her rebellion. *"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me...Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Isaiah 1:2,4)*. Nahum prophesied a warning, *"God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance*

on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies" (Nahum 1:2). Prophets and men of God have warned the people of this world that God will judge his enemies and bring His wrath upon them.

APOSTLES

The apostles set a pattern for us to follow in speaking God's truth. When the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, told Peter and John not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus," they *"answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:18-20). They told people of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter warned about false teachers and encouraged Christians to follow the divine pattern and expose and refute error (2 Peter 2:1-3). The Apostle John also gave warnings against men departing from the faith (1 John 4:1).

The Apostle Paul condemned sin and error as he preached the gospel. Will the liberals among us call Paul a "watchdog" or "policeman?" Jesus revealed to Paul that his mission was *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:18,19). Paul set an example of showing the Divine way that pleases God. Paul was set *"for the defense of the gospel"* (Philippians 1:1,17) and exposed error (Romans 16:17,18; Acts 20:29,30).

JESUS CHRIST

Our perfect example, Jesus Christ, called names, called sin just what it is, sin, and charged the righteous to preach boldly in truth and love. In Matthew 23, Jesus called the Pharisees and Sadducees hypocrites, blind guides, fools, blind, serpents, and vipers. Jesus spoke plainly enough for the people to get the point! *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5). We must follow Jesus in order to be pleasing to God!

Jesus is the source of truth. *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1: 17). He taught the truth that sanctifies (John 17:17) and that can set men free (John 8:32).

The Bible gives us many examples of men of God standing for truth and right. Let us follow faithful men of God as they followed Jesus Christ. We will not fail if we follow the Only Begotten Son of God!

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