

The Church: A Faith Class

“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**

people of God to serve them “meat” in due season. (Luke 12:37) Our Lord was prepared to carry forward the Heavenly Father's plan for the ultimate reconciliation of his human creation, and the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:15-18

IN PART 1 OF THIS SERIES

of “Treasures of the Truth,” evidence was given to indicate that we were living at the end of this present Gospel Age (Dan. 12:4), and that the foretold time had come for God to unlock his treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of Truth. (Isa. 45:3) It was further established that our Lord Jesus had returned (Rev. 3:20), and was present with the

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

In the second part of this series, the importance of faith will be considered as it relates to

the Lord's people living at the end of this Gospel Age. The word faith, as it is used in New Testament scriptures, represents a level of conviction or belief in respect to one's trust and relationship to God and his Word. The Apostle Paul provides us an excellent definition of the true meaning of faith in his letter to the Hebrew brethren. "Now faith is the substance [ground, or confidence, *Marginal Translation*] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) Then, after relating the degree of faith that Abel and Enoch each possessed (vss. 4,5), the apostle admonishes, "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (vs. 6) The word 'diligently,' as found in the phrase 'them that diligently seek him,' suggests the Christian's active effort to search the Word of God for Truth and understanding. The word means 'to search out, or to seek after something carefully' [#1567, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*].

The subject of faith is brought to our attention by Paul, when he wrote to the brethren at Rome, and said to them, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1,2) The apostle further explains, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (vs. 9) Whoever does not have a deep sense of faith in Jesus' sacrificial blood, thus lacks the necessary character to be an overcomer.

John wrote explicitly in connection with this particular point. "Whatsoever is born [begotten, Greek] of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—I John 5:4,5

It is evident that the first step in our High Calling of God is our faith in Christ Jesus. It is essential that the Lord's people possess this element of faith before they may be justified by him. The degree of our faith determines the attitude of our minds respecting God and his promises, which are all founded on the faith that we have in Jesus, and his blood which was shed on our behalf.

TRUSTING IN HIM

Another word that is closely associated with faith is trust. Trust means our ability 'to flee to something or someone for protection or refuge, to confide in, or to have hope' [#2620, *Strong's*]. This word was used by David in relation to his song of thanksgiving and praise to the LORD for his deliverance. "David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust [#2620, *Strong's*]: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence."—II Sam. 22:1- 3

David had put his entire trust in knowing the wonderful God of his salvation. God was the 'rock' upon which David could build his trust, his 'fortress'

where he could take refuge and hide, his ‘deliverer’ in every time of trouble and distress and the ‘horn’ of his salvation upon which he could take hold for refuge. He spoke again in this sense, “I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength [rock, *Marginal Translation*], in whom I will trust [#2620, *Strong’s*]; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” (Ps. 18:1,2) Luke referred to this horn when speaking of Jesus, the antitypical and greater David, which had come into the world. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.”—Luke 1:68-70

David used the word trust again when writing about God’s favor to the righteous. “Let all those that put their trust [#2620, *Strong’s*] in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass [crown, *Marginal Translation*] him as with a shield.”—Ps. 5:11,12

JUDE: BROTHER OF JAMES

Little is known about Jude, who is the author of our featured text, other than to relate the few comments with which he begins his epistle. We know that he was a servant of our Lord Jesus, a brother to James, and that he was addressing his words to those who had been called by God and kept for Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:1) Other internal evidence suggests

that Jude knew, and was perhaps closely associated with, the Apostle Peter. This is especially noted by the common use of similar words and parallel phrases in each of these epistles.

GIVING ALL DILIGENCE

Jude discloses that he “gave all diligence” (vs. 3), when writing to establish the faith once delivered unto the saints. We note, too, that Peter used the same words, “giving all diligence” (II Pet. 1:5), when he wrote concerning our faith. The word ‘diligence,’ as used in this scripture, is defined as that which is done with despatch (in haste), eagerness, and care [#4710, *Strong’s*]. The Apostle Paul used the same word that has here been translated diligence when encouraging the brethren at Corinth concerning their Christlike fruitage. To them he wrote, “Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence [#4710, *Strong’s*], and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of forwardness [#4710, *Strong’s*] of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.” (II Cor. 8:6-8) Then again, Paul acknowledged Titus’ labor of love, when he further spoke, “Thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care [#4710, *Strong’s*] into the heart of Titus for you.”—vs. 16

THE COMMON SALVATION

Having thus established his purpose in writing to those who were being sanctified by God, Jude speaks of our faith as the ‘common salvation’—the great hope in which we, who are being called during

the present Gospel Age, all share. The common salvation is spoken of in contrast to something that would otherwise be an ordinary, or common, occurrence to the general public, but now belongs to a very select class of the Lord's people. These consecrated Christians are those who have been called to walk with our Lord Jesus in newness of life, have accepted their High Calling in him, and have responded by earnestly contending for it.—Rom. 6:4; Heb. 3:1; I Cor.16:13

The word 'common,' as it is here used, denotes that which is shared or belonging to several others, as in the case of faith or salvation [*Vine's Amplified Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*]. In the opening remarks of his letter to Titus, the Apostle Paul writes concerning the common faith, and puts the word common in its proper spiritual perspective. He begins by saying, "Paul a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God, our Saviour; To Titus, mine own son after the common faith." (Tit. 1:1-4) It is evident that Paul loved Titus very much and appreciated his Christlike spirit, and the 'common faith' which they both loved and shared.

PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

The apostle provides us further insight into his deep love and appreciation for the common salvation

in his letter to the Philippians. He said to them, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” (Phil. 3:13-15) We are thus encouraged to ‘press toward the mark for the prize of the [our] high calling,’ to treasure our common salvation and our consecrated walk in newness of life with others of like precious faith.

EARNESTLY CONTENDING

In our featured text, Jude informs us that it was essential for him to write and to exhort the Lord’s people to earnestly contend for the faith. The sense in which the child of God contends for the faith suggests a high level of commitment, as in the case of a combatant who is striving intensely toward a particular goal in a contest. The word ‘earnestly’ has been added to provide further force [*Vine’s*]. Jude’s use of this combination of words is found only here in the New Testament, and thus emphasizes the degree of importance that must be placed on our continuing struggle, in our contesting, and our subsequent growth in faith.

RUNNING FOR THE PRIZE

When writing to the Corinthian brethren, Paul emphasizes this level of combativeness, struggle, or fight that he was enduring in his walk in newness of life. He stresses its spiritual importance by

saying, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—I Cor. 9:24-27

THE FIGHT OF FAITH

Paul had long been engaged in this struggle, and was well seasoned in his Christian walk as reflected in his first letter to Timothy. He encouraged the one, whom he addressed as his beloved son, to “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (I Tim. 6:12) His admonitions suggest the very high level that is required by the consecrated Christian regarding the development of combativeness and overcoming.

Later, when he wrote to Timothy a second time, he gives us another important perspective in connection with his personal struggles and difficulties in the narrow way. First, he inspires Timothy to greater faithfulness by saying, “Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of [fulfill, *Marginal Translation*] thy ministry.” (II Tim. 4:5) These are wonderful words of encouragement. The great apostle then gives us a rare glimpse into his own heart condition when he tells Timothy, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I

have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.”—vss. 6-9

Our good fight of faith consists in considerable measure of our defense of the doctrines of Truth. This is forcefully implied by Jude in our featured text that we should ‘earnestly contend,’ or be willing to fight, for the faith as it was once given by our Lord, the apostles, and other writers in the Early Church. This suggests our readiness to stand for the Truth at all costs, and against its many enemies. This would include our fight against the creeds and theories of men that misrepresent God's loving character over his human creation, and those who would rob the child of God of its hope and joy.

LABORING FERVENTLY

In Paul's letter to the brethren at Colosse, he told them that although he was not personally acquainted with any of them, he had heard encouraging reports about their faith in Jesus and their love for the Lord's people. (Col. 1:1-4) He indicated that their fruitage had resulted largely from the work of Epaphras, as he further stated, “The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant,

who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.”—vss. 5-8

The apostle’s testimony establishes the degree of fervency and zeal with which Epaphras preached and was earnestly contending for the faith that he, too, had received. As further indication of his love for the Lord and his people, Paul includes the following greetings to them, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring [striving, *Marginal Translation*] fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.” (Col. 4:12,13) Epaphras was surely blessed by his association with the Apostle Paul and his words of encouragement and endorsement on his behalf.

CONVICTION AND CONFIDENCE

As we have seen, faith represents our level of conviction or belief in respect to our trust and relationship with God and his Word. It is that which Paul expressed as being the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”—Heb. 11:1

Total confidence and trust in God and his Word should be earnestly striven for, and we are further admonished to earnestly contend for that faith which was given to the saints of God so many centuries ago. It is a faith that grows stronger with the trials of life, and increases more and more as the child of God recognizes the blessings and loving, tender care that come to us through God. This faith grasps the wonderful promises of becoming heirs

of God and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus in his future kingdom. We trust the outworking of his marvelous arrangements that are yet in progress. This will be manifest in the reconciliation and recovery of the human family from the sentence of death because of father Adam's disobedience to the Divine law.

FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH

The foundation and development of our faith was expressed by James when he encouraged us, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." (James 1:5,6) The apostle thus emphasizes our need for having a strong growth of faith in God who is always willing to help and strengthen in every time of need.

This fruitage of the Spirit may be measured by the degree of faith and steadfast determination that we are committed to. This will largely determine whether the consecrated child of God, who has been baptized and buried into our Lord Jesus' death, may ultimately be victorious in his consecrated walk in newness of life with him.—Rom. 6:4,5

We know to receive the prize of our High Calling in Christ Jesus that we must trust our loving Heavenly Father and be full of faith all the days of our Christian walk. This point has been expressed by the revelator who said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

TEACHINGS COMMON TO OUR FAITH

The meaning and importance of adhering to sound teachings is addressed by the Apostle Paul, when writing to his beloved Timothy. He encouraged him, "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."—I Tim. 4:16

From still another perspective of our faith and its progressive development, we must consider the various teachings and beliefs of the Truth that we share together. The household of faith holds dear to their hearts the combined treasures, beliefs, and teachings of this wonderful Truth that represents the common beliefs of our faith.

These fundamental doctrines of the Bible in some cases were recorded centuries ago by Old Testament prophets and others. Many other precious truths were established at the beginning of this present Gospel Age by our Lord Jesus, his apostles, and others of which Jude spoke concerning the faith that was once delivered unto the saints. Still other basic teachings have been revealed to the household of faith by our returned and present Lord at the foretold 'time of the end,' during this present Gospel Age.

These precious truths are familiar to many students of the Bible and include, amongst others, the Ransom, Resurrection, and Restitution, as well as the High Calling to the Church. They also comprise Justification by Faith, the Sin Offering, and Second Presence. Also of great importance are the Covenants: the Abrahamic Covenant which provided for the development of the Seed of Promise;

the Old Law Covenant together with its mediator Moses; and the New Covenant which will have the church as its Mediator. Some of these teachings that are common to our faith will be discussed in future articles in this series. ■