

A New Kind of Love

*“This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”
—I John 4:21*

IN OUR DAY, UNIMAGINA-

ble horrors are being perpetrated by some who feel they are thereby contending for their faith. The entire world is presently besieged by zealots intent upon imposing their religious beliefs, employing wholesale and indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children by sword, gun, and bomb.

Many religions, including nominal Christianity, have long, bloody histories rife with so-called “holy wars.” This was barbarism initiated and driven by an utter misunderstanding of what it means to contend for one’s faith. The past and present barbarity in the name of God is a chilling example of the deadly extremes that are possible when those who contend for their faith are not motivated and guided by the power and principles of the Holy Spirit.

While abhorring such extremes as perpetrating physical harm upon those with whom they disagree, there are, nevertheless, within Christendom

(so-called) those who feel contending for the faith is a license to be argumentative, confrontational, even verbally combative, about doctrinal technicalities. These are as seriously in error as those who visit terror and bodily injury upon those with whom they disagree. Both attitudes grossly dishonor God and mark their bearers as being bereft of the Holy Spirit.

Jude, strongly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, had something very specific and urgent to say to the church about contending for “the faith.” (Jude 3) His short, but potent, letter was a direct product of that holy influence.

RISE OF “UNGODLY MEN”

Centuries before Jude wrote his letter, Enoch, under the power of the same holy influence, had warned of the rise of “ungodly men” who would be judged and condemned in due time. (Jude 14,15) However, Enoch did not define those ‘ungodly men.’ It was left for Jude to define and identify them for the collective benefit of all who would, likewise, experience the power of the Holy Spirit during the Gospel Age.

Neither Enoch nor Jude were addressing the extreme, murderous zealotry that so besets the world today, which is so obviously evil to all but the perpetrators themselves. Rather, they were specifically concerned with forewarning the church of the much more subtle insinuation of ungodly men into the fellowship of believers; ungodly men who, though not obviously evil to the casual observer, would, if left unnoted, do great harm to ‘the faith’ while professing to defend it.

Jude's focus was on "certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago [who] have secretly slipped in among you . . . godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."—Jude 4, *New International Version*

UNGODLY MEN IDENTIFIED

"These men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them." (vs. 10, *NIV*)

He continues to identify the ungodly men: "These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. . . . Remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, 'In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit."—vss. 16-19, *NIV*

In verses fourteen through nineteen, Jude's sole purpose is to characterize the ungodly men; to identify the ungodly men and to define for his brethren what constitutes the ungodly men. They are those who do not have the Holy Spirit. That is his point. The ungodly men divide; they do not unite because they follow their worldly instincts. They cannot do otherwise because they do not have the Holy Spirit. They pretend they do. They often seem to. But they do not.

CALLED AND LOVED BY THE FATHER

Jude addresses his brethren collectively; not only those living in his day but all the consecrated and spirit-begotten today. “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance. Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”—Jude 1-3, *NIV*

After thus urging them to contend for ‘the faith,’ Jude tells his brethren how to contend for the faith. “You, dear friends, build yourselves . . . in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”—vss. 20,21, *NIV*

However, between exhorting his brethren to contend for the faith and telling them how to contend for the faith, he inserted, almost parenthetically, his long urgent caution about the ungodly men in verses 14-19, some verses of which we just noted. By this means, he emphasized the critical difference between the godly and the ungodly. The ungodly men that Enoch and Jude spoke of are masters of emulation and deception. But, skilled as they are in the practice of spiritual fakery, they cannot build themselves up in the ‘most holy faith,’ they cannot pray in the Holy Spirit, and they cannot keep themselves in the love of God.

“CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH” DEFINED

Jude is urgently stating that ‘contending for the faith’ is something other than argument and

confrontation. He suggests in verses twenty and twenty-one that contending for the faith is a collective building up in the most holy faith, a collective praying in the Holy Spirit, and a collective keeping of the brethren in the love of God.

In these verses, Jude is urging his brethren to do the very things which ungodly men cannot do. Jude is thereby emphasizing that those things of which the ungodly men are utterly incapable are the very means by which those who are truly godly contend for the faith!

The ability of the consecrated to build themselves up in the faith and pray in the Holy Spirit is clear. However, some might question whether, being imperfect, they have the further ability to keep themselves in the love of God. It might be surmised that it is the all-powerful and perfect God who keeps the consecrated in his love.

Further, these might say our Lord seems to imply as much in the Gospel of John—"No man is able to pluck them [the consecrated] out of my Father's hand."—John 10:29

Romans, the eighth chapter, seems to lend further support to the idea that surely it is God alone who has the ability to keep the consecrated in his love. "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to

come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 8:35-39, *New American Standard Version*

In these verses, we see the wisdom of Paul. He has listed every possibility, every element and condition, every conceivable circumstance, every power, in both the physical and spiritual realms, both in the present and in the future. Everything that can be imagined, dreamed of, or ever created is listed as lacking the power to separate the consecrated from the love of God . . . with the exception of the consecrated themselves! Therefore, Paul is saying it is only the consecrated who can separate themselves from the love of God! God will never separate the members of the church from his love. Nor will he ever allow anything, or anyone else, to do so, neither now or in the future, either in this realm nor in the spiritual realm.

OUR DUTY

Shortly before his death, the Lord told his disciples, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.” (John 15:9) He then added that they would ‘continue’ in his love if they did something very specific—“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”—John 15:10

It is clear, therefore, that the duty of the consecrated is to continue in their Master’s love by keeping his commandments, as he kept the commandments of his Father.

Again, it might be asked, "How can the consecrated—flawed, and imperfect as they are—possibly keep the Lord's commandments as he, in his perfection, kept the commandments of his Father?" The answer is in the commandment itself. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12) Here, the Lord gives his disciples a commandment that, even in their imperfection, they can keep. But it is a commandment that can be kept only if they are determined to keep it; and they can only be determined to keep it because they have the Holy Spirit, which those ungodly men that Enoch and Jude spoke of do not have and can never have! It is this unique ability to love one another as their Lord has loved them that marks the Lord's people as entirely different from those ungodly men. Exercising this ability to love is the means by which the godly collectively contend for the faith regardless of their flaws, weaknesses, and imperfections.

Therefore, those who will keep themselves in the love of God will do so by loving their brethren, just as their Heavenly Father and his beloved Son loves them—constantly, fervently, and without reservation.

Our Lord Jesus, as well as Paul and Jude, encourage all those who would keep themselves in the love of God to be determined to love one another constantly, fervently and without reservation under all circumstances—whether it be tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or sword; whether it be death, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come, or height, or depth, or any other creature. They are saying these must be as determined to

love one another as the Heavenly Father is determined to love them.

It is in this way that they collectively contend for the faith. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34,35) No other faith defines contending for it in this holy way. No other faith ever has.

Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you for myself or hear about you from a distance, I may know that you are standing firm, one in spirit, one in mind, contending [collectively] as one man, for the gospel faith, meeting your opponents without so much as a tremor. This [loving oneness] is a sure sign to them [the ungodly men] that their doom is sealed, but [it is] a sign of your salvation."—Phil. 1:27,28, *New English Bible*

In light of the foregoing, some may be inclined to feel the doctrines of the faith are, therefore, somewhat of an impediment to the development of the love spoken of by our Lord, the Apostle Paul, and Jude, and should be put aside or minimized to forestall strife or tension. These seriously err! For it is only those doctrines that define the very love that our Lord, the Apostle Paul, and Jude encourage us to exercise in contending for the faith. Without those doctrines (teachings) it would be impossible to conceive of, and identify, the superior order of love that our Lord spoke of in the Gospel of John; a love that is far higher than the order of love expressed in the so-called golden rule with which even the world is familiar.

A NEW KIND OF LOVE

When our Lord told his disciples to 'love one another' in John 13:34 and John 15:12, he was not referring to the love of the golden rule of which even the world is capable. Our Lord issued a new commandment because he had brought a new kind of love to light to his disciples, of which the world is ignorant and of which those of the fleshly world are entirely incapable. The new kind of love of which our Lord was speaking in the Gospel of John is a love that is generated only by the power of the Holy Spirit, and only within those who have been spirit begotten.

This is the love to which Paul and Jude were also referring, and it is this new kind of love that can be defined if one understands the doctrines of the faith.

The doctrines of the Ransom (I Tim. 2:6) and Sin Offering (Lev. 16:15) define the depth of God's love. The doctrine of Two Salvations (John 5:28,29) defines the breadth of the love of God. The doctrine of the High Calling (II Pet. 1:4) defines the height of God's love. The doctrines of the Covenants (Gal. 4:24) define the length of the love of God. This is love of a higher and different order, a love far beyond that expressed by the golden rule.—Luke 3:6

The doctrines are indispensable to understanding what sort of love it is that the church is to collectively develop and express as it collectively contends for the faith.

UNGODLY INCAPABLE OF THIS TRUE LOVE

The ungodly men have a remarkable ability to appear as completely genuine children of God. They can appear as kind and sympathetic, charitable,

and hospitable, learned, zealous for the Gospel, even compassionate and caring. What betrays and identifies the ungodly men is their utter inability to even pretend to love determinedly, fervently, constantly, and without reservation. They are entirely incapable of feigning this kind of love because this love is solely the product of the Holy Spirit. Only those begotten of the Spirit are capable of loving in the manner the Lord commanded them to love. It is this ability that distinguishes them from the ungodly men. It is this ability that enables the godly to contend for the faith in a godly manner. It is that very love for one another which defines the faith, and raises it above all others as a “standard for the people.”—Isa. 62:10 ■

