

THE LETTER FROM JUDE

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# THE CRITICAL ISSUE OF FAITH

“BUILD YOURSELF UP IN YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH”

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*Dear friends . . . contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*

*But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith . . .*

JUDE 3, 20

- ▶ Jude wrote his letter in response to the doctrinal corruption and spiritual laxity that was becoming prevalent in the churches. In the most urgent tones, he implored followers of Christ to fight for their faith, to consider it their most priceless possession, to not neglect it or take it for granted, but to make certain that they were systematically strengthening their faith.

- ▶ At various times, Jesus characterized his disciples as having:
  - ▶ little faith - Matthew 6.30
  - ▶ no faith - Mark 4.40
  - ▶ a lack of faith - Mark 16.14
  - ▶ absent faith - Luke 8.25
- ▶ Jesus warned of people turning away from the faith (Matthew 24.10), and wondered if he would even find faith anywhere on the earth when he returned (Luke 18.8).
- ▶ The Bible emphasizes that the "righteous live by faith" and warns against a faith that does not persevere but "shrinks back" – to such a person God says, "I will not be pleased with him" (Hebrews 10.38).

## WHAT IS FAITH?

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

HEBREWS 11.1-3

- ▶ In its simplest definition, faith is believing someone or something.
- ▶ Because faith always involves something unseen and unverified, it requires trust in what is unverified. In turn, if I truly trust, it will always lead to action on my part (e.g. John 9.7). (Conversely, it is possible to hear and not believe (e.g. Israel in the wilderness), or to believe but not act in trust (cf. Numbers 20.12).

## THE PRECEDENT FOR FAITH

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

ROMANS 1.20-21

- ▶ Although God is invisible, the evidence, or precedent, for believing in Him and recognizing His character is displayed in creation and nature.
- ▶ Furthermore, a critical aspect of needing to believe in God is found in our own sense of conscience and guilt (cf. Romans 2.14-16).

- ▶ The spoken revelation about God, His character, attributes, and purposes, are the “Holy Scriptures” which are inspired by the Holy Spirit and is the truth about the Holy God (Romans 1.2; 2 Peter 1.21).
- ▶ The full revelation of God’s truth and purposes is made known through Jesus Christ (John 1.18). Belief in Jesus Christ is “saving faith” (Romans 3.23-24), which results in “justifying faith” (Romans 3.26).
- ▶ It is saving faith because we believe that we are unholy and sinful and therefore under God’s judgment; it is saving faith because we accept as true that Jesus Christ is God’s Son and the only one capable of saving us from judgment.

- ▶ It is justifying faith because, in trusting in Jesus Christ and in believing that he died for our sins and was resurrected to eternal life, God, in return, forgives the judgment against us and credits the holiness of Christ to us (Romans 4.5-7, 24-25).
- ▶ Therefore, by believing in Christ, we are accepting the entire revelation of Scripture as true and critical for salvation and eternal life (2 Timothy 3.15)–
  - ▶ the transcendent holiness of God,
  - ▶ our sinful nature and guilt in violating God's moral nature and law,
  - ▶ the exclusive provision of salvation through Jesus,
  - ▶ the consequences of judgment in rejecting Christ.

- ▶ Thus, our faith is a “most holy” faith—it is the truth about a holy God, revealed through the Holy Scriptures for the benefit of unholy people, who can only be right with Him through the holiness of Christ (cf. Romans 1.2-4; Titus 1.1-3).
- ▶ Furthermore, it is not simply “faith”— it is “holy” faith (*hagios: separate from common condition and use*). It is not belief at one’s discretion or amendable to the changing values in society; it is not what I feel is right or how I see or perceive truth. At the end of his revelation, Jesus specifically addressed such action, warning against amending in any way God’s prophetic word (Revelation 22.18-20.)

## IS YOUR FAITH “A MOST HOLY FAITH”?

*These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 PETER 1.7

- ▶ Jude wrote his letter in response to the misinformation that was infiltrating the thinking of many churches. It sounded good to people, they liked it, and so they believed it. (cf. 2 Timothy 4.2-4).
- ▶ The value (or sacredness) of our faith, its quality, and its durability require that we build it up and contend for it so that we can overcome this world (1 John 5.4) and obtain the goal of our faith (1 Peter 1.9).

## TWO EXAMPLES OF BUILDING UP OUR MOST HOLY FAITH

### ▶ Old Testament—

*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

DEUTERONOMY 6.6-9

### ▶ New Testament—

*Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

ACTS 17.11

## WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR FAITH?

The New Testament contains many directives regarding the stewarding of our faith. Here are some of these references to encourage and motivate you to build up this most critical and priceless possession.

- ▶ Examine whether you are truly in the faith - 2 Corinthians 13.5
- ▶ Continually grow in your faith - 2 Corinthians 10.15; 2 Thessalonians 1.3
- ▶ With other believers, pursue a unified faith - Ephesians 4.13
- ▶ Demonstrate your progress in the faith - Philippians 1.25

- ▶ Your faith should express itself in obedience (Romans 1.5), love (Galatians 5.6), and service to others (Philippians 2.7; 1 Thessalonians 1.3; 2 Thessalonians 1.11)
- ▶ Have a sincere (real, without hypocrisy) faith - 1 Timothy 1.5
- ▶ Know the deep truths of the faith - 1 Timothy 3.9; 4.6
- ▶ Be sound (healthy; uncorrupted and true) in the faith - Titus 1.13; 2.2
- ▶ Possess the power of an overcoming faith - 1 John 5.4
- ▶ Be engaged in systematically building up your faith - Jude 20
- ▶ Accept the testing of your faith as necessary for acquiring a strong and mature faith - James 1.3; 1 Peter 1.5-7

- ▶ Recognize that you are engaged in spiritual warfare for the very existence of your faith—
  - ▶ Guard and protect your faith - 2 Timothy 4.7
  - ▶ Fight the good fight of faith - 1 Timothy 6.12
  - ▶ Contend for the preservation of the faith in the manner and content that it was originally entrusted to us by Christ and his apostles - Jude 3

The critical importance of building up our faith can be seen in the terms that Paul used to describe to Timothy what has happened to the faith of some whom they mutually knew: wandered (1 T 6.21), denied (1 T 5.8), abandoned (1 T 4.1), shipwrecked (1 T 1.9), destroyed (2 T 2.18).