

Contenders of the Faith

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:29-31)

Men of God invest time, prayers, fasting, tears, preaching and teaching into people in order to build the church. One of their greatest fears is that after they have given their lives for the gospel the fruit of their labors will be spoiled; that wolves will creep in and run away with the sheep. These wolves are influenced by their selfish desires of obtaining riches and making a name for themselves. They “pervert” the gospel message. Some stray from the fundamental and foundational Bible doctrines and lean toward humanistic ideas, manmade teachings, modernistic and materialistic thinking, and become more like a social club than a church.

As you look at the Epistles that the Apostle Paul wrote, you will find that they did stray from the teachings they had received.

The wise man, Solomon, admonishes us to “buy the truth and sell it not.” (Proverbs 23:23) In another lesson we have already mentioned that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that is hid in a field. When a man finds it he sells all that he has and buys it. It is also like a merchant who will sell all that he has in order to purchase the “one pearl of great price.” (Matthew 13:44-46)

The truth that we have received is an inheritance that is passed from generation to generation. We should be forever thankful that we have found the truth; possess it carefully; spread it liberally; and “..earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) In Jude, the writer (considered to be the half brother of Jesus Christ) continues to warn us that we should “...put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” (Jude 5)

The Book of Jude was written to warn the church about false teachers, ungodly influences, and admonish them to be “contenders of the faith.”

We need to be like the man who was drowning in the ocean. A ship passing by threw out the lifeline to him; he grabbed it and was pulled into the ship (the place of safety). Once on the

vessel the ship's crew encouraged him to let go of the lifeline. He continued to grasp tightly the rope and refused to let it go.

The captain pleaded, "You are now safe. Let go of the rope." The man persistently refused.

Again he pleaded, this time trying to loosen the man's grip on the rope. The man fought back adamantly and said, "I will not let it go. When I grabbed onto this rope I grabbed it for life."

You and I were also sinking in sin (Psalm 40:2) and were brought by the Great Rescuer, Jesus Christ, into the ship. How can we let go of the lifeline now? We must remain in the ship in order to be saved. (Acts 27:31)

In Hebrews 2:1-3 we are warned against drifting away from the faith. As believers allowing the gospel to slip away from us we find ourselves drifting downstream and having no anchor (Hebrews 6:19) to hold us secure. We have, through neglect, let go of the lifeline.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation..." (Hebrews 2:1,3)

"If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." (Colossians 1:23)

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ...and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9) He felt so strongly about the last statement that it is repeated again. "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Verse 9)

*Consider the postage stamp.
Its usefulness consists in the
ability to stick to one thing
till it gets there.
(Josh Billings)*

The Book of Deuteronomy includes the farewell messages of Moses to the people of God. They had come to the end of wandering in the wilderness and were about to pass into the Promised Land. Numbers records their wandering in the wilderness for over thirty-nine years and Deuteronomy records just one month of time. This book was to be read to the people every seven years. (Deuteronomy 31:10-13) Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, the people are admonished to "remember and forget not." This book is often quoted in the New Testament and was also the

book that Jesus quoted from when He was tempted. The word “forget” is mentioned nine times in

the book of Deuteronomy. Another eight times we are told to “take heed.” Fifty two times we are ordered to “possess” the land. In Luke 17:32 we are told to “remember Lot’s wife.” She was grabbed by grace but still not saved. She was escorted by angels out of Sodom and Gomorrah but still looked back. Remember, “...no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62) We must rather “press toward the mark.” (Phil. 3:14) We must do what the early church did. “They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...” (Acts 2:42)

“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” (Deuteronomy 4:2)

- Read also Revelation 22:18-19

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons.” (Deuteronomy 4:9)

“Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget..” (Deuteronomy 4:23)

Study Questions

1. What is one of the greatest fears of men who build congregations? _____

2. How are “wolves” influenced? _____

3. What do “wolves” endeavor to do? _____

4. How do “wolves” pervert the gospel? _____

5. What did Solomon say in Proverbs 23:23? _____

6. What did Jude say we should contend for? _____

7. Why was the book of Jude written? _____

8. What are we warned against in Hebrews 2:1-3? _____

9. What will happen to us if we preach another gospel? _____

10. What amount of time does Deuteronomy cover? _____

11. How often was Deuteronomy to be read to all the people? _____

12. How was Lot's wife grabbed by grace but still not saved? _____

13. What did the early church do with the Apostles' Doctrine according to Acts 2:42? _____

Keep Believing In What You Know Is True! Stick to it! You're going to make it!

Additional Notes