

February 19, 2017

How to Remain Faithful to the Truth

Jude 17-25

17 But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said. **18** They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. **19** These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them.

20 But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, **21** and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

22 And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. **23** Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.

24 Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. **25** All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.

First Peter, then John now Jude warn us about false teachers and **the danger of false teaching**. Jude planned to write about something else but then God said, "Hey Jude" and urged him to write about defending the faith against false teaching:

Jude 3-4

Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

We have been warned from the times of the apostles about the last days. The last times or the last days began from the Resurrection of Jesus and will last until Jesus returns. Until then we have been told that scoffers – false teachers would come and wrong philosophies would come from them. What is their purpose? only to satisfy their selfish and ungodly desires. They follow their natural instincts not God's will because they do not have God's Spirit in them. They are the ones who create divisions because of what they teach or believe. Today there is a strong belief and convincing to do what your instincts are telling you to do. Today the teaching is don't restrain yourself from doing what you want to do. Be careful you are not convinced that it is right and good to do what your natural instincts tell you to do if what it is telling you to do is not in line with the will and Word of God.

Galatians 5:16-26

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. [human nature without God] The sinful nature [human nature without God] wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ...

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature [human nature without God or human instincts not under the influence of God's Spirit], the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division [which is what Jude mentioned], envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! [Have you ever ask yourself what G really like? Indirectly Paul answers that question. If this is what the Spirit-filled life is like (more loving, more joyful, more patient etc), then it must follow that this what G is like as well]

“It is most important to our spiritual welfare that we hold in our minds always a right conception of God. If we think of Him as cold and exacting, we shall find it impossible to love Him, and our lives will be ridden with servile fear. If, again, we hold Him to be kind and understanding, our whole inner life will mirror that idea. The truth is that God is the most winsome of all beings and His service one of unspeakable pleasure.”

~A.W. Tozer, “God is Easy to Live With,” in *The Root of the Righteous*

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there [in other words they have surrendered their will to God]. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. [in other words don't do things that will grieve the Holy Spirit].

Paul and Jude are warning us to remain faithful to the truth, rather than listen to philosophies of the world, believed and taught by those who do not have the Spirit of God.

So today I want to speak on: **How to Remain Faithful to the Truth**; but before I get to the how, I have to share this first:

If as Jude states in v19 These people ...follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them.

Then if we are going to live by truth rather than error we must first make sure we have God's Spirit in us – the Spirit of truth. **Do you have God's Spirit in you – the Spirit of**

truth? Let me repeat two things we saw in Galatians 5 about having God's Spirit: (1) Surrender your will to God. (2) Don't do anything the Holy Spirit doesn't want you to do.

Here is how to receive and know that you have the Holy Spirit

1. Give Yourself to God (Surrender your will to God)

Acts 2:38

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. Ask God for the Holy Spirit

Luke 11:13b

...how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

3. Obey God

Acts 5:32

The Holy Spirit ... is given by God to those who obey him.

Ephesians 4:30

And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.

4. Faith

Gal 3:2b

The Holy Spirit came upon you only after you believed the message you heard about Christ.

Surrender your will to God

Ask God for the Holy Spirit

Obey the Holy Spirit

Believe

Have you done that? If not you are led by your natural instincts (i.e.) – human nature without God rather than the influence of God Spirit – the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit is by faith, but we must then faithfully build on that foundation.

If we are going to stand against false teachers and be faithful to the truth we must take Jude's advice in 4 areas. Here then is How to Remain Faithful to the Truth:

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit (v20)

Wow, there is a lot in that one verse.

(1) Build on the foundation of your faith in Christ

We must exert ourselves to grow in the faith. We need the disciplines of hearing, reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible and we need the discipline of prayer if we are going to be built up in our most holy faith.

Notice that we must build each other up in the most holy faith. We need each other; we need each other's encouragement, wisdom, prayer. We must not separate ourselves from one another. People say they don't have to be a part of the body of Christ – the church – to believe in God. That may be so, but they usually are not growing in the most holy faith.

(2) (in remaining faithful to the truth) Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Again let me point out that we must have the Holy Spirit. You can't pray in the power of the Holy Spirit if you do not have the Holy Spirit.

Surrender your will to God

Ask God for the Holy Spirit

Obey the Holy Spirit

Believe – or receive the Holy Spirit by faith then build on that faith by knowing and applying the Bible to your life and by having a life of prayer, praying in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray and what to pray for. Pray in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. That means pray to know God's mind and God's will. It means listening not just speaking. It means praying to connect with God not just to get what you are requesting. It means get quiet with God, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you, then pray.

Sometimes we can't pray and need the Holy Spirit's help.

Romans 8:26-27

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

I've been there, have you? Times of such pain that I didn't know what to pray; such pain that there were no words only groans, while the Spirit pleaded for me in harmony with God's will.

and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love. (v21)

Here Jude describes a third way to stay strong in the truth.

(3) Keep yourself in God's Love

To stay in God's love is to remember that God *first* loved us — he took the initiative to accomplish salvation.

1 John 4:10

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

To stay in God's love obedience to God is key:

John 15:9-10a

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love.

To stay in God's love we should think often of the second coming of Christ and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ who will bring us eternal life.

It is going to happen dear brothers and sisters. God's promise will come true. Christ will return and bring us to eternal glory with Him. God's promises are not "ifs" but "whens". And so remember how Peter exhorted us:

2 Peter 3:11-12 NCV

So what kind of people should you be? You should live holy lives and serve God, as you wait for and look forward to the coming of the day of God.

(4) Show mercy to others

And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives. (v22-23)

Here Jude shifts attention from watching over our own souls to caring for the souls of others

The first group consists of believers who have listened to the false teachers and have begun to doubt God's truth. They still have reservations, so they have not yet joined the false teachers. These people are not to be ridiculed; rather, they are to be shown mercy and carefully drawn back into the church by providing them with the true teaching of the gospel. Believers who are well taught in the faith can *be merciful to those who doubt* by quietly and calmly talking with them, explaining the false teachers' error, and reminding them of the truth they had originally received.

The second group has gone beyond doubting. Agreeing with the false teachers, they are on the road to destruction. They need someone to literally step in their path and *snatch* them *from the fire*. The "fire" refers to the eternal punishment awaiting the false teachers (as we read earlier in v4). If we saw someone about to be burned by fire, we would quickly grab that person and pull him or her out of harm's way. That's the attitude the true believers are to have toward those sliding toward false teaching. We need to grab them and pull them away before it is too late. We need Spirit filled Christians, growing in the faith, staying in God love able to refute false teaching and defend Christianity so that they can rescue the misinformed.

The third group refers to those already in the false teachers' camps — those who have already joined them. These people also need *mercy*, but believers are to mix their mercy with extreme caution, hating the sin, but loving the sinner. While believers might try to rescue those deceived people, they must do so without compromising the truth or allowing themselves to become contaminated by the false teaching understanding that this is spiritual warfare. Believers have God on their side, but they must remember not to attempt anything in their own power lest they too fall prey to the false teachers' lies. Use caution, be in prayer, be in the Spirit; remembering that we have this assurance: Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen. (VV24-25)