

# The Faith Once Delivered

In verse three Jude explains the driving force for his message and the burden laid upon him by the Holy Spirit to write as he does. It has been suggested Jude's first intention was to follow the pattern of other apostles and write with 'all diligence' and care about the person and work of Jesus Christ. This would include the doctrines of salvation now referred to as the doctrines of God's sovereign grace which Jude calls 'the common salvation'.

## **A common message**

These doctrines explain the work of God for the salvation of all His people. They are clearly taught by Paul, Peter, James and John in the pages of our New Testament. This is the apostolic foundation, the faith once delivered to those sanctified by the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ and called by the Holy Ghost. They are the common blessings and promises of God to all His elect in the covenant of grace. Our salvation consists in the doctrines of imputed righteousness, limited, substitutionary atonement and effectual calling which all believers have in common.

## **A common inheritance**

These gospel truths can also be called 'common' because they are the shared experience of God's elect. The love of God is common to all whom He has chosen to save and sanctified in Jesus Christ. Their election to eternal salvation is the same, being founded upon pure grace. They are bought with the price of Christ's blood and justified by the same righteousness. They are regenerated by the same Spirit and called by the same gospel. All God's elect shall possess the same glory. It is our common salvation.

## **A message to be maintained**

However, it is not now Jude's purpose to repeat what has been written elsewhere concerning this common salvation. That message had been faithfully delivered by other apostles. Rather, 'it was needful' he says, for Jude to rally the church of Jesus Christ to *defend* these truths and *contend* for the faith against attacks from enemies even within the ranks of the professing church. Jude knew men would creep into the church who would deny 'the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ'.

## **Here I stand!**

Certainly, the church is oppressed by external forces but it is also afflicted by deceivers who infiltrate to contradict the truth from within. Jude's message is intended to expose and identify these hypocrites. His exhortation to the church is to contend for the truth of the gospel by upholding the common salvation delivered by God the Holy Spirit and taught in the ministries of the other apostles. The true faith is not to be lightly surrendered but contended for earnestly and maintained with tenacity and clarity.

## **Upholding the truth**

The principal method of contending for the truth is by faithful preaching of the gospel. This is primarily the responsibility of those called to minister and labour in the word and doctrine. Yet there rests, too, an obligation upon the whole church to maintain, nurture and promote faithful gospel preaching. We do this by being personally and collectively knowledgeable of what is true and jealous for it. It is not enough to say we believe the gospel if we do not know the gospel we believe. Paul tells us there is another gospel which is no gospel at all. Can we distinguish the two?

## **The objective truth of God's grace**

Our common salvation is more than warm feelings of good will to all. It is the foundational truth upon which our faith is built. By the gospel of grace Christ's saving accomplishments are rightly understood and God's promises believed. The apostles knew these foundations would be attacked, so Paul told Titus to speak 'the things which become sound doctrine'. It is not a church's historical confession of faith that matters but what is preached from the pulpit.

## **Mark them out**

Paul tells the church at Rome, 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them'. John says, 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (that is, the doctrine of our common salvation in Jesus Christ) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God

speed’.

**Stand fast!**

Let us be clear, earnestly contending in this context does not mean physically fighting for the faith using the weapons of this world, the power of politics or even the debating skills of the natural man. It means not tolerating false teachers but countering their pernicious teachings with truth. It means standing fast for the distinctive gospel of free grace when some, even within the professing church itself, try to promote man’s will and works as factors contributing to salvation.

Amen

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