

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expositional Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 6- The History of Heresy **Jude 4**

39. The History of Heresy Part 9

WOSM Friday 12/28/07

Welcome again my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **Jude** and today I want to continue our examination of The History of Heresy by looking at the fourth verse of Jude- so let's read verse 4 together:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now on our last broadcast, we found that the Apostle Paul has requested that the very first Church Council be convened to make a ruling on the heresy of the Judaizers. This Council became known as the Jerusalem Council and is recorded for us to examine in **The Acts 15**.

Now a Church Council is a serious thing. Church Councils are called when a serious threat against the Church is discussed. The overwhelming cause of the Church Councils all throughout history have been about issues of Doctrine. Again, this illustrates how serious the Church viewed Doctrine to be.

In some Churches, the Council is called a Synod, or "The Court of the Lord". This "court" convenes with the elders of that Church to listen to the arguments and examine the evidences and to hear the witnesses on both sides of an issue and then the ruling is made for or against the argument.

Over the centuries an ungodly belief began to rise up concerning Councils that still exists in some Churches today. This belief says that the men of the Council, by virtue of their position in the Church

have within themselves the ability and the authority to make the ruling based upon some type of an anointing that rests within the men who sit on the Council. So, this ruling is based upon their own human reasoning and their own human ingenuity. A good example of this type of Council is the American Episcopalian bishops synod and the College of Cardinals of the Roman Church and some of the modern Pentecostal groups.

In the 16th Century, the Reformers said that this type of Council was illegitimate because their rulings were based upon human power and not supernatural power. The Reformers said that no Council's ruling on a Doctrinal issue is from God unless that ruling comes from Scripture and from Scripture alone.

Both the Episcopalian and Roman Councils declare that their rulings on Doctrine may be based upon three things: tradition, history and Scripture, while several Pentecostal groups declare that their Council rulings may be based upon prophecies, dreams, visions, personal interpretation and Scripture.

This is why we get such contradictory and confusing and ungodly messages from these groups concerning Doctrine. This is precisely why the only safe and proven method of determining Doctrine has proven to be the way of the Reformers and that is by utilizing Sola Scriptura- from the Scriptures and from the Scriptures alone.

It is interesting to note that of all the seven major heresy groups, in each case- the decision by the Church was made against the seven major heresies using the approach of Sola Scriptura and that is why those rulings have stood the test of time.

And it is also interesting to note that in every single case where a Church Council did not use Sola Scriptura, but employed human reasoning, tradition, dreams and visions or human logic to make decisions about Doctrine, that off the wall and ungodly rulings teachings like allowing homosexual bishops; promoting the worship of Mary; Bishops being prohibited to marry; the institution of Purgatory; and dictionaries on prophetic terminology came forth.

The Council of Jerusalem was convened to determine whether or not a man was saved by Grace through Faith in Christ alone or whether a man was saved by Grace through Faith plus that man

keeping the Law of Moses. In other words- the issue at stake was – Is Grace enough to justify the sinner?

So, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to meet with the other Apostles and the elders to determine this issue. We read in **The Acts 15:2-4:**

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

So even on the way to the Council, Paul was continuing to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and was continuing to see that God indeed was saving the barbaric Gentiles by Grace through Faith in Christ alone. When he got to Jerusalem, Paul ran right into the Judaizers. Let's read **The Acts 15:5&6:**

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

So here we are in Jerusalem. Here is the Apostles James and Peter and Paul, along with the Church Elders and a host of Gentile converts standing against this group of legalists that wanted to pervert the right way of the Lord concerning Grace. Now look at what happened next. Let's read the first part of **The Acts 15:7:**

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them...

The Bible says that these holy and godly and righteous leaders in the Church disputed over this issue. And this part of this verse illustrates what I am talking about. The issue was so important that the leaders of the Church knew that they had to get it right. So, because it was nothing short of the Doctrine of Justification and the

Grace of God that was at stake here- they discussed and examined and talked and argued and wrestled and anguished over this issue. We don't do that today and the reason we don't do this is not because we are more loving or more intelligent than the Apostles. No, the reason we don't do this much today is because we simply don't care about the Truth as much as these men did.

Today we tend to view personal opinion as being the same thing as Divine Truth and that we all have a right to our own individual opinions about God and the things of God and what the Scriptures mean and any disagreement about Truth today is looked at as being a bad thing and a disruption of Christian unity.

Doctrinal *debate* is viewed by many today to be worse than Doctrinal *error*. It is considered by far too many to be loving and spiritual for the Church to accept whatever anyone says or teaches or writes as long as it is sincere and it is considered to be carnal and unloving and even unchristian to reject what someone says or teaches or writes- even if what they say or teach or write is contrary to Scripture.

We who lead in the modern Church have somehow gotten to the place where our brains have become disengaged about the Bible and we feel as though we must not ever do anything to break unity- not even for the sake of preserving Divine Truth.

Beloved, Christian unity is only as strong as our understanding and comprehension of God's Truth is correct. Christian unity is not this warm fuzzy feeling that we get when we hold hands and sway back and forth as we sing Khum-Bah-Ya together. That is not unity- that is sweet and that is nice and that makes you feel good and that makes you cozy- but Christian unity must be based upon the inspired and infallible Word of the living God or it is nothing more than a fantasy.

We have traded symbolism for substance in the modern Church. We have traded purity for acceptance. We have traded being right for being loved. We have traded Truth for relationships, and we are all paying the price for that error. Today, the Jehovah's Witnesses are adding thousands of new converts every week- mostly from the roles of Churches- precisely because our people don't know the Bible. The Mormon Church is growing in double digit numbers every year because our people don't know the Bible. Today, right now as you are

listening to this broadcast, thousand of pilgrims from all over the world are kneeling on the steps in Rome saying the Hail Mary's and the Our Fathers and giving money to the Roman Church precisely so that their dead loved ones can borrow enough good from the Treasury of Merit so that they may be set free from Purgatory. You have people running around all over the world today who are trying to buy or earn their Salvation. They are desperately trying to do something that they hope that God will receive as being good enough for them to earn a place in Heaven. I'm telling you- it breaks your heart. But beloved, how much more damage to the Church and to the Doctrines of the Bible has to be done before we wake up and repent and return to the authority of Scripture?

Thank God Paul and Peter and James didn't take a cavalier approach to Doctrine like we do today, or we wouldn't have a Church. Thank God that these men were willing to call a Church Council to decide the matter. Thank God they were willing to dispute the matter. Thank God they were willing to debate and to argue and to fight and to make sure that what the Church taught was what the Bible said.

Let's look at **The Acts 15:7-11:**

7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

Peter destroys the heresy of the Judaizers here by saying that the Christian Church should not put a yoke upon the neck of the Gentile believers which neither they nor their fathers were able to

bear. Here Peter is proclaiming exactly what the Bible says about the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses is good; it is holy. The Law of Moses didn't come from the devil- the Law came from God. It is right; it is rigid; it is inflexible and unmoving.

And Peter says here that the Law is a yoke. But how can something that God gave be a yoke? It isn't because there is something wrong with the Law- because there is nothing wrong with the Law. The reason that the Law of God is yoke around the neck of humanity is not because the Law is bad- the Law is a yoke, beloved, because *we* are bad. You see, the Law is a mirror that shows us how sinful we are. Because the Law says, "**You shall not covet**"- every time that we lust- we violate that Law, and we are condemned by that Law and brought to the place where we are a transgressor of the Law. Peter knew that the purpose of the Law as not to save anybody- but he knew that the purpose of the Law of God was to condemn everybody so they would then look for a Savior.

The point is that trying to be good; trying to keep the Law will never save you because you *cannot* keep the Law perfectly. Keeping all Ten Commandments isn't hard, dear friends- it isn't difficult- is *impossible* for humans to do. No one- not even Moses kept the Law perfectly. Every once and a while, you have some foolish person who thinks he can actually keep the Law- like the famous self- righteous rich young ruler. But we need to know that the only reason that this man thought he had kept the whole Law was because the level of his own personal deception was so great that he was blind to his own sinful nature and need for Grace.

And this is precisely why God gave us the Law- not so that we could try real hard and then one day reach the place of perfect obedience. No, God gave the Law to prove to us that we are wicked sinners and that we need a Merciful Savior. We must try and we should try to keep the Law- but we will never attain the spotless Righteousness that the Law promises to those who obey it perfectly in and of ourselves. That is precisely why Jesus died.

Beloved may we all return to Jesus? May we all return to the Gospel and to the Bible? May we all drop our man- made doctrines and begin to recapture the Truth of Scripture. We all have drifted and picked up things that we should let go. Well, I'm out of time for today-

but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.