

Dear Friends,

Many commentaries draw parallels in the teaching and even the symbolism between Jude and 2 Peter 2. Perhaps a valid comparison. Both passages deal with false teachers and their errors. God didn't approve of them in either passage, nor does He approve of them today, however accepted they be with popular teachers. Isaiah faced a similar problem some 800 years before Jesus came.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (Isaiah 8:20 KJV)

Study the context to learn the painful fruits of false beliefs. They never satisfy. They never feed the soul nourishing food that grows the believer into maturity and fruitful contentment. They typically feed the ego and pride. In the end, many of those who chase one bad idea merely look for the next bad idea and regularly move from their current bad idea to the next, never satisfied and never spiritually fed.

Both Peter and Jude give us healthy and sound alternatives. Painful as it is to study these passages, failure to know them--and to believe them--leads to unfruitful and immature spiritual disease. It always increases "*to more ungodliness.*" (2 Timothy 2:16 KJV)

Jude gives us a double view of spiritual health and mature vitality of faith. At the beginning of his letter, Jude teaches us to faithfully, "***earnestly***" contend for that one faith which was once delivered to the saints, not to seeking the latest novel deviation from it. And at the end of his letter, Jude teaches us to build ourselves up in our "***most holy faith.***" We only accomplish these two objectives of sound, godly--Biblical--faith by knowing and avoiding the steady parade of error which floods our minds. We can't know the imagination of every false teacher, nor should we try. However, we can immerse our minds daily in a diligent study of Scripture. If our minds are immersed in the pure teaching of Scripture, any error from any source or man will immediately sound a discordant note to

our Bible trained "Ear." And that is Jude's and Scripture's faithful reminder.

Lord help us to do it,
Joe Holder

Jude

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:3-4 KJV 1900)

Jude introduces himself as “*the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.*” If we examine the names of Jesus’ (Half) brothers (Matthew 13:55 KJV), both James and “Judas”

or Jude appear in the list. I am inclined to believe that the human author of the New Testament Book of James and this letter were written by these men, Jesus' half-brothers, James and Jude. Despite the family link, Jude identifies himself as Jesus' servant. While Jesus' brothers were skeptical of Jesus being the Messiah and God Incarnate during His public ministry, at least these two brothers became believers. (John 7:3-5 KJV) As believers, their familial relationship to Jesus was not nearly as important as their spiritual relationship.

Why did Jude write this letter? The two verses cited above answer the question. We might interpret the two verses in a couple different ways.

1. Jude was preparing to write the letter to explain and teach his readers regarding "*the common salvation.*" "Common" is used in the New Testament to refer to something shared by a group of people. Immediately following Pentecost, the believers "...*had all things common.*" They pooled their possessions. (Acts 2:44-45 KJV) Paul wrote Titus "*after the*

common faith,” the body of accepted and believed truth uniformly held by the early church. What follows, according to this view, affirms the major tenets of that “common salvation,” or the eternal salvation shared in “Common” by all regenerate or born-again people. That Jude would refer to our eternal salvation in this way strongly suggests a different, an “Uncommon” salvation not shared by all regenerate people. It was this “Uncommon” salvation that Jude addressed in his warnings against evil people and doctrines that do not submit to and harmonize with the “...***faith once delivered unto the saints.***”

2. The second perspective is that Jude intended to write both of our “common salvation,” as well as to equip and warn believers of errant teachers who surreptitiously enter churches and work to pervert the “*faith once delivered unto the saints*” into the errors they believed.

The two views are equally logical and instructive. Perhaps we should blend the two.

We only honor our Lord and the salvation that all God's born-again children share by avoiding error and errant teachers in favor of that one body of truth "*which was **once delivered unto the saints.***" Contemporary professing Christians could learn an invaluable lesson from Jude. The one "Faith," the one right and Biblical body of truth that Jesus first taught the twelve, and they continued to teach believers till their death, is the only worthy "Faith" all believers in all ages should seek to know and to believe. The accepted view of our day abandons this teaching in favor of each individual privately deciding what they think. In this view, "the faith" must be newly discovered by individual believers in each generation. This idea always results in endless deviations and "Private interpretations" that contradict that "once delivered" faith in Scripture. Personal opinion replaces Scripture rightly divided, not "wrested," the "once delivered" faith. Jude highlights and affirms Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 3:15. The "*church of the living God*" is the one and only "***pillar and ground of the truth.***" This teaching in no way sets up a competition between Scripture and a church's

belief. A faithful church will appeal to Scripture as the foundation for what it holds as that once-delivered-faith.

I reject the occasional idea that elevates confessions of faith to equality with—or superiority over—Scripture. I've encountered sincere people who held such a view of—for example—the 1689 London Confession of Faith. Those who so magnify this or any confession need to refresh their minds on the words of the confession itself regarding the supremacy of Scripture.

The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved. (London Confession of Faith, 1689, Chapter 1, Of the Holy Scriptures, paragraph 10)

Any confession of faith, held by any “Church” that does not regard Scripture as its “...supreme judge...in whose sentence we are to rest...into which Scripture...our faith is finally resolved” fails 1 Timothy 3:15, “***pillar and ground of the truth***” “***Faith***.” The framers of this confession would not have tolerated any thought of its contents being regarded as supplanting Scripture alone. In the details, this confession is not always as concise as this paragraph is, sadly demonstrated by various denominations of varied “Faiths” all claiming they believe this confession.

Paragraph 9 in the same section of this confession further reinforces the authors’ high regard for Scripture.

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly. _

Take special note. The authors of this confession did not believe that their confession was to be the "...infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture," as sadly many who profess loyalty to the confession believe. Based on their own statement in this paragraph, Scripture interprets Scripture and either validates or rejects all points in any confession. No confession of faith is inspired or of equal divine influence as our New Testament.

Jude echos Peter's inspired reasoning in 2 Peter 1. The bedrock foundation for what he wrote was what he wrote by the direction of the Holy Spirit, not even by his personal experiences, even his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. Once Peter completes this foundation of Scripture, he immediately warns his readers, as does Jude, of the sadly inevitable presence of false teachers. Instead of ever looking for deviate interpretations or ideas that entertain our fanciful imagination, faithful believers in every generation should imbed the writings of Scripture in their minds and look for that thread of "common" truth, that "*faith once delivered unto the saints.*" Only by saturating our

minds and hearts with these Scriptures, rightly interpreted (2 Timothy 2:15-16 KJV), can believers avoid the false teachers and their “*profane and vain babblings... (which always)... increase unto more ungodliness.*”

...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. To “*earnestly contend for the faith*” is polar opposite to ignoring that faith or to compromising it with various “Private interpretations” or utterly non-Biblical imaginations that parade as that faith. I dislike the false characterization of our name “Primitive” Baptist as backward, cave-man-like. The intent of the name is to affirm our passion to hold to that “faith once delivered to the saints” without modification, compromise, or alterations. Jude effectively exhorts us to “earnestly contend” for that “Primitive” faith. His letter serves to remind us. The more error that parades as Bible truth the greater the urgent need for believers to “earnestly contend” for that faith as it was first delivered.

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. Jude in no way implies that God caused these evil men to be evil or to teach the grave errors that abandoned that once-delivered faith. However, we should take note. When anyone, we included, abandons that once-delivered faith, God has indeed “Ordained” the judgment, the condemnation, which false teachers bring justly upon themselves. Believers in the Lord’s “*pillar and ground of the truth*” are charged to maintain their once-delivered faith, earnestly, faithfully so. But the ultimate judgment or condemnation which these people face is not so much the disapproval of faithful men, as of the Lord Himself. Many years ago, I was complaining to a respected friend about a mutual friend who had abandoned this faith. Bless my friend, he listened to my complaints quietly. When he spoke, he gave me wise insights that I shall never forget, “Joe, at some point, we need to remember. We serve in the Lord’s church. In His time and His way, the Lord shall deal with this man and any who abandon His Word.” Time has wondrously demonstrated the wisdom my

friend spoke that day. The Lord did indeed, quietly and over time, increasingly neutralize this man and his corrupting influence. Jesus is Lord over all things to His church. If we validate our hope of being part of that “Church,” Jude charges us to earnestly contend for this once-delivered faith, not strive to find exceptions and deviant ideas to it. But trust the Lord to judge and to “Sentence” those who abandon or compromise it. His judgment is righteous, and it is certain, though He may not administer it on our personal timeline.

Jude makes no effort to execute judgment against these people. He does, however, leave no doubt as to the character of those who knowingly abandon that once-delivered faith.

...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, God always reveals Himself as a “Moral” God, so any ideas proposed by man that compromises that principle is ungodly, not according to God’s moral character, and it commits the abomination that Jude here describes. It turns “...the grace of our God into

lasciviousness,.” Louw-Nida’s New Testament Greek dictionary defines the word translated “lasciviousness” as completely lacking in moral restraint, extreme immorality. David warns that people who look to false gods eventually imitate their god. (Psalm 115:8 KJV) In this case, ungodly, literally amoral (Having no moral compass whatever) people, if they think of God at all, imagine Him in their own evil image.

After his strong warnings against compromising or abandoning the faith once delivered to the saints, Jude closes his letter on a strong positive note.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 1:20-21 KJV)

How do we build ourselves up in that once-delivered faith, the “**most holy faith**”? How do we keep ourselves “**in the love of God**”? And look for His mercy and its final and glorious manifestation, “**eternal life**”? To accomplish this

heart of devoted grace, of godly graciousness toward other believers and firm rejection of ungodly people and their ungodly ideas that assault the moral character of God? Scripture often “Bookends” important ideas. His opening thought deals with our charge to maintain that once-delivered faith, and his closing thought to keeping ourselves in that “**most holy faith.**” I suggest Jude’s letter presents the perfect example of this strategy. Whatever the Spirit directed the human authors of Scripture to so emphasize, we should regard as the most crucial and important message of the book or letter. Christian faith is not about any believer’s personal opinions or private ideas, or about the latest and most novel interpretation of this faith. It directs us to old truth that is held by the Lord’s “**pillar and ground of the truth.**”

If we gave ourselves a truly objective “Report card” of our faith on this basis, what might our grade be? The latest novel explanation always gets an “F.” Our personal opinion always gets an “F.” Only the faith of Jesus, once and for ever delivered to the saints and preserved for future generations on the pages of Scripture,

rightly divided, not wrested, must be our answer
if we hope for the Lord's "Passing grade."

Elder Joe Holder