

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**

60. The History of Heresy Part 30

WOSM Tuesday 01/29/08

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 we are continuing to study about who these "certain men" that Jude talks about here in verse 4 really were by studying the seven major groups of heresy and we are continuing to examine the sixth major heresy to attack the Christian Church late in the fourth century called Pelagianism.

As we saw last time, Aurelius Augustine was the Bishop of Hippo- a city in North Africa. He was the most influential theologian of his day and sometime in the late fourth century, Augustine wrote a very simple prayer that began to circulate around the world. Augustine prayed,

"Lord, give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt"

A British monk named Pelagius countered Augustine's prayer with his statement,

"If I ought- then I can".

Pelagius vehemently rejected the very notion of Augustine's prayer- and of the underlying theology behind the prayer, by saying that God would never tell anyone to do anything unless that person had the power and the ability to do it of his own free will and human power. Pelagius taught that the very fact that God told someone to do something already indicated that God had given that man what was necessary to do it and that obedience or disobedience was simply a matter of free human will at play.

Augustine said that free human will was a myth, and that God has to empower and enable the human to be able to do God's Will and that man is totally and completely and utterly incapable of doing anything for God without God's Grace and Power.

Augustine taught that man was totally and completely overcome with sin from the Fall of Adam and that fallen man was incapable of satisfying God in and of himself apart from God's Grace and Power.

Pelagius taught that this was nonsense and that man was not overcome and ruined by the Fall but possessed enormous ability to choose to do good or evil on his own accord without any help or assistance from God or anyone else.

Tracing his statements back to their logical beginnings, Pelagius taught that no one was contaminated by the Fall and that Man was not "born in sin". Pelagius said that a baby that is born is "tabula rasa", which is Latin for "a blank sheet of paper", meaning that we who are born after Adam are not contaminated by the Fall. So, what Pelagius taught was that Original Sin did not exist and that Man was born spiritually just fine- that he was not separated from God at birth and that Man had to do something himself to be a sinner. Needless to say, that what Pelagius taught was very well received and very popular.

On the other hand, Augustine said that what the Bible taught about Man was true. Augustine defended the fact that Scripture clearly taught that Man was born in sin and that all men are deeply and profoundly affected in a negative way by the Fall- to the point that we are all born completely separated from God and spiritual dead. Augustine said that Scripture taught that Man didn't have to do anything personally to be a sinner- but that the reason that Man sins is because he is already a sinner in his heart and nature.

To Pelagius, the greatest embodiment of Man was what he called his own Free Will- that Man was Sovereign, and that Man could choose of his own free will to serve God or to rebel; to be saved or to stay lost; to obey Scripture or disobey. Pelagius had no need for God's Grace or Mercy and did not think that Man needed a Savior, but that Man simply needed to build up his own will power and self worth so that he would choose of his own free will to serve God. To Pelagius Salvation was not a gift of God's Grace- but simply a choice- that Man could make or not make based upon his own free will.

Pelagius was the greatest proponent of the Glory of Man and was the Father of what we call today Secular Humanism. Pelagius' concept of Man was not based in Scripture at all- but was based on his own human ingenuity and intellect.

Augustine, on the other hand, taught that Scripture clearly stated that God was Sovereign, and that Man is born in sin and shapen in iniquity and is totally and that because his nature is utterly corrupt- Man is completely *incapable* of choosing to serve God apart from God's Grace which awakens his soul and gives to man the gift of faith- which allows him to believe. So Augustine said that Salvation was a gift given freely by a loving and Sovereign God Who operates independently of Man's will.

Augustine taught that Scripture was true and that fallen Man is desperately wicked in his nature and that Man needed to be saved by a Sovereign Savior Who alone would choose Man; and draw Man; and deal with Man; and convict Man and then gloriously regenerate Man so that Man would have both the desire and the power to believe and repent and be saved.

As the Pelagian Controversy grew, it became clear to everyone that this was not simply a war between two strong willed men; neither was it theological hair splitting. But at the heart of the Controversy were serious issues that were at the bedrock of Christianity itself and would have to be worked out.

Doctrines involving the fundamental nature of God and of Man and the Gospel were all interwoven around the Pelagian Controversy.

As the Controversy came into clear focus, a simple question began to emerge:

Does Man need God's Grace in order to stand before Him in

Righteousness?

Pelagius answered this question with an emphatic, “No!” Pelagius taught that, while God’s help is always appreciated, it was not absolutely necessary because unsaved man can simply exercise his own free will and choose not to sin. Again- this power given to the free will of man is the foundational teaching of what we call today Secular Humanism.

Pelagius taught that Man was just fine without God and didn’t need a Savior. Pelagius taught that Man simply needed to develop his own mind and his own intellect and his own pride and his own self worth where by and through his own will power Man would be able to improve his own condition through education and a reallocation of human will power to save himself totally apart from God and Grace and Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Augustine was just as emphatic when he answered, “Yes!” Man *does* need God’s Grace in order to stand before Him in Righteousness. Augustine said that Man was utterly dependant on God’s Grace for Salvation because fallen Man has been totally and completely ruined by the Sin of Adam and can do absolutely nothing to redeem himself from the just wrath of a Righteous God.

Augustine taught that fallen man was utterly lost and could not redeem himself apart from God’s Grace and a Savior in Jesus Christ and that Man’s free will could not and would never operate in any way to save him- precisely because it was fallen.

The Pelagian Controversy is recognized by Church historians of all ages as the most serious of all heresies to ever hit the Church both then and now. It shook the Christian Church to its roots and forced the Church to develop Sound Scriptural responses to the false teachings of Pelagius.

If you think about it, Augustine’s prayer was simple enough.

“Lord, give what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt”

But what exactly was Augustine asking? One Church theologian said that Augustine was recognizing that all of life is Grace. That we live; we breathe; we do what we do as sinful human beings precisely because God *enables* us to do those things and that by acknowledging

our utter dependence upon God- Augustine was giving God the Glory and the Praise and all the Honor for all of life itself- while Pelagius was attempting to keep that glory for Man.

God has commanded us to be saved- so Augustine said that we are to ask God to give us the Grace to be saved. God has commanded us to worship Him- so God gives the Grace that we need to worship Him in the manner in which He is entitled to be worshipped. God has commanded us to pray- Augustine was saying, *“God give us the ability to pray in Your Will and in Your Power and with your Heart and in Your Name”* God has commanded us to evangelize- so Augustine was saying, *“God, give us the ability and the Power to Evangelize.”*

Every Christian today has to acknowledge the “rightness” of both of Augustine’s requests, because when we pray, we are asking God to do for us and in us and with us and through us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Dr. Thomas Nettles, Professor of Historic Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, says Augustine’s prayer showed that we are dependant on the Grace that God gives to us in order that we may accomplish the commands that God gives.

In essence, Augustine was simply asking God for help to do what he could not do apart from God. So why did this simple and innocent pray cause such a backlash from Pelagius?

Pelagius was what is called a Moralizer. Pelagius didn’t believe that Man had been so corrupted by the Fall that he couldn’t fix what was wrong with himself without God’s Aid or Power or Assistance. Pelagius thought that it was superstitious to ask God to do what Man ought to do himself and had the power to do without God.

The lost unsaved world jumped on Pelagius’ teachings and took off with them. They loved his teachings that said that Man wasn’t lost and fallen because of Adam’s sins, and which taught that Man didn’t need a Savior. They perfected Pelagius’ error into a new religion called Secular Humanism which teaches that Man is his own god and that Man is totally capable of doing anything he wants- including be righteous and morally pure without any aid or Grace from God or anything else.

This heresy of Secular Humanism had circulated around the Grecco- Roman culture for centuries, but because Pelagius blended his teachings with Secular Humanism, this new religion and false

teaching literally tried to knock down the front door of the Church and take over Christianity.

Pelagius, as a humanist, taught that every man was created as a brand new Adam- completely perfect and unhindered by the blackness of Original Sin and the corrupting influence of a sinful nature. Pelagius taught that fallen man was completely capable of obeying the commands of God without any aid or Grace from God to do so.

Pelagius taught that men did sin from time to time and that Jesus' atonement provided some real help for those weak and foolish people- but Pelagius taught that if man put forth enough effort- it was possible for Man to build up his own human ability through sheer will power to cease from sin on his own and therefore he had no need for Jesus or the Cross or the Gospel or Salvation.

Pelagius attacked Original Sin head on and said that there was absolutely no connection to what Adam did and those who were born after Adam. Pelagius chose to ignore what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in **1 Corinthians 15:21-22:**

21 For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

I tell you that when the Pelagian Controversy attacked the Church of Jesus Christ, God raised up men who defended the Faith against those who wanted to destroy it. These men didn't sleep. These men didn't fall down on the job. These men were alert and they were faithful watchmen on the wall and they didn't slumber in the night but stood on the walls of the Church to guard it against those who do not love God and who do not follow Christ.

Jude called these heretics ungodly men. Peter called them ravening wolves. Paul said that they were accursed. John said that they were antichrists for trying to bring in false teachings and for twisting the Scriptures and for hiding the Truth from God's people.

And I tell you that the Pelagian heresy is alive and well today and it is in our Schools and it is in our Businesses and it is in our Government and it is in our culture and sadly, it is in our churches and because of that, we must not slumber and we must also be alert and we need God to raise up another generation of faithful men who

love the Truth and who will proclaim the Truth and who will not bow to popular opinions but will love God enough to stand on what God has said and will love people enough to tell them what God has said and these warrior preachers will blow the trumpet in Zion and they will sound an alarm in God's holy Mountain and they will fervently and earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. 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.