***Faith

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-030***

Please take your bibles now today, and open to Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," and this is segment number eight.

Information has come to the apostle Paul, while he is in prison in Rome, concerning the spiritual status of the Christians in the city of Colossae. This has been brought to him by one of the members of the Colossian church, a man named Epaphras. The Colossian Christians, Paul was told, were being tempted to return to their pagan ways of thinking and of acting. These people at the Colossian church were mostly gentiles. Therefore, they had a natural affinity for gentile culture. Secondly, Paul discovered that they were being exposed to some heretical teaching about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ – teaching which degraded Him from His position as one of the members of the Godhead. Paul, therefore, is writing to the Colossian Christians in order to counter these two dangers which are facing them as believers.

Paul prayed for God's grace and peace to engulf them in their daily lives. Furthermore, he prayed regularly for these believers. And when he prayed for them, he thanked God for the good report that he had received about them through Epaphras. That's always a good thing to do – to recognize the good things that people do, and to remember their past performance in history.

I have to keep reminding myself of that regularly. When somebody does something outrageous, and somebody comes along says, "Dr. Danish, do you know what so-and-so has just said about you? He has just said that you said; that you did; or, that you thought." And it is so outrageous and outlandish and untrue that you just become ready to go to battle. And yet you say, "But this is a person who has demonstrated loyalty to Jesus Christ – an individual who has knocked himself out year-after-year serving the Lord." Why do we have to be perfect? It is hard enough for me to be perfect, let alone for the rest of you to be perfect. And I always take things such that it is a glitch, or it is a blip on the screen of a very solid Christian servant of the Most High God. And I give people a chance to put a lot of glitches in their experience as long as, after the glitch is over, they come back, and they're on-track, and they're loyal, above all, to Jesus Christ. The human element is not what is important.

So, the Apostle Paul is going to take this church to task for some very serious things that they're falling into. But he does not forget that they have come a long, long way, and that they have been consistent in their loyalty to Jesus Christ. Therefore, he takes everything in that perspective. He never forgets the background of where these people come from. And when they need a little slack, he gives it to them.

When Christians under our care, of course, grow in spiritual maturity, as these Colossians indeed have, and they are loyal to Jesus Christ, then we should thank God for them. And that's quite proper that we should do that.

Now I'll remind you that Colossians 1:3-8 form a single sentence in the Greek Bible. And if you will look closely, you will see that it's strung together as a single sentence in English too to convey that. And what is in this long sentence is details of what Paul is thanking God for, concerning these Christians. And he just thinks of one thing after another, and these things pour out of his mind, and he hooks them together, and hooks them together grammatically, so that he has this one long sentence. He describes the nature and the basis of the Colossians' spiritual growth and stability.

So, we come to verse 4, where we read, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints." The verse begins with Paul saying that he has heard something. The Greek word looks like this: A K O U O, "akouó" (ak-oo'-o). This is what he heard from Epaphras. Paul himself personally received this report from an eyewitness. Paul considers this to be reliable information, because it is an eyewitness report. It isn't "So-and-so told me, who told so-and-so, and told so-and-so, and now it comes to Epaphras." That would not be reliable. Paul knows the maturity of Epaphras. He knows his understanding of doctrine. So, Epaphras has given him a report, and Paul is indicating that, since (or because) he has heard this report, it causes him to have reasons to thank God for them. And now he's going to enumerate some of those reasons.

**Faith**

Now, it so happens, again, in the Greek Bible, that the grammatical construction here indicates that what Paul heard, he comprehended. He said, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus." And the way it's stated, it indicates that he understood what was exactly taking place among them. And what he heard about was their faith.

This is the Greek word P I S T I S, "pistis" (pis'-tis). This is the great word in the Bible associated with the word "believe." The first thing Paul comprehends very clearly about the Colossian believers, from what he hears, is their "faith." This gives a very clear picture about what these people believe, and how they react to what they have been taught. Faith, as you know, means confidence in some authority – that that authority is telling you the truth. You trust the authority, and you act accordingly. So, if somebody comes and tells you something, you have to exercise faith in that person as to whether you're going to believe that what he says is true or not. That's what faith is. If your doctor comes and tells you something about yourself, then you must look at this doctor and say, "Does he merit my faith and confidence? Will I cast myself upon him in this respect or that respect, because I believe that what he's get telling me is the truth?" And that's the issue of faith.

The idea of "Keep the faith, brother" is meaningless. And we hear that expression: "Keep the faith." Faith is nothing. Faith is zero. Faith is zilch. It is the object of faith that gives it merit and meaning. And if you put your faith in a bad doctor, I don't care how much you believe in him, the results are going to be bad. If you give your faith to somebody who gives you a report about something, and that person is not a reliable reporter (that person does not merit your faith), then you are going to suffer the consequences of having put your belief in a bad source.

You have to be very careful what you are going to place your faith into. And we are faced with this every day of our lives. We are always, day and night, exercising faith in someone or something to make a decision to guide our actions: whether it is in your employment; whether it is in your business; or, whether it is in something you're going to buy, you are exercising faith in some authority that ultimately leads you to a decision. Now if the authority is bad, your faith is ill-placed, and the results will be disappointing.

So, Paul says, "I have heard, and I fully understand about your faith (your confidence in an authority)." Faith is not a mindless leap in the dark. And the Christian faith is not a mindless leap in the dark. It is a faith which is based upon an authority, and the authority is the Bible. That's why it's so important to understand that if you're going to deal with God, you have to deal with the Bible. You cannot have your faith in what some preacher tells you from the pulpit, if you have not verified that in scripture. You cannot have your faith in the religion you were born into. That ill-placed faith on that principle alone has taken millions of people into hell, and will continue to do so.

Some people say, "I was born a Muslim. Therefore, I am God's chosen, and I will go to paradise." No you won't. If you are born a Muslim, and you act on the basis of the beliefs of Islam, you will go to the lake of fire. Some people say, "I am a Roman Catholic, the greatest and the biggest church." Well, please remember that that is a Roman Catholic Church that didn't even begin until the year 800. There never was such a thing as a pope until about the year 800. There never was anything in New Testament time (in the first eight centuries of Christianity) that was anything like what we have today in Roman Catholicism. This was a gradual degenerating thing that evolved, and you believe that because that great institution has existed, and you're part of this large number of people, that that bears your faith. Your parents believed that. They couldn't be wrong. Yes they are.

So, this business of faith has to be understood as dependent in value upon the authority that you place it in. And the only faith that you can properly place your confidence in, in terms of spiritual things, is the Bible. So, when it comes to salvation, it has to be faith in Jesus Christ. If it's faith in anything else, you're out of luck. When it comes to living the successful and happy Christian life, it has to be faith in the Bible (the principles of doctrine), or else your faith is ill-placed. It is faith that gives us the assurance of the realities of God which are unseen to us.

**Faith in Christ Jesus**

Paul says, "I give thanks because we heard, and we fully comprehend what we heard, of your faith in Christ Jesus." Now, here's something that just passes you by in the English language. The Greek has to help us. The word for "in" looks like this, E N, "en" (en). And this is directed toward Christ Jesus. This is a preposition in the Greek language that indicates "en" in terms of being in the sphere of something, like being inside of a circle. It is very important to understand that the Apostle Paul uses this word elsewhere in this way, and that here he is using it in precisely this manner. He is speaking about faith being in something, in the sense of being in the sphere of something. He is not using it like you use another Greek proposition "eis" (ice), which also means "in." That also means "in," but this means "in" as a preposition of motion toward an object that it's going to stand upon. And here, this object is Jesus Christ. To say "in Jesus Christ" means to go to Him, and it rests upon Him. That is totally different from the idea of this "en," which is to be inside of the sphere of something. He is speaking here, not about "in" as a motion toward an object.

For example, this is exactly what is used in the famous John 3:16. This one here means "moving toward an object that it rests upon." John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him." And there it uses this "eis" "in," which means going toward Him as the object upon which that faith then rests. This is confidence in Christ to save you because He has paid for your sins personally: "believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

So, this preposition "eis" is in as a status – the status of believing upon Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. This is faith unto Jesus Christ. It is faith moving toward Jesus Christ.

Now, we have, here in Colossians 1:4, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus", this other "in:" "en." It means "in the sphere of." You may illustrate this by a bird in the sphere of the air. You would say "in the air." You may illustrate it as a fish in water. You'd say "in the water." It's in the sphere.

So, here Paul sees the Colossian Christians living in the sphere, or in the environment, of faith in Christ Jesus. What is he referring to? He says, "I understand fully about your faith. I know that you're living what you believe. You are living a lifestyle which operates in faith in God and faith in the Scripture. This stresses the practice of faith rather than the presence of faith. This "en" is the practice of faith. This "eis" is the presence of faith in Christ Jesus. This is when you are wrapped up in the Word of God. Your mind thinks the Word of God. You live the Word of God. You make decisions by the Word of God. You wake up in the morning in the Word of God, and you go to bed at night in the Word of God. You live in the sphere of the Word of God.

**Lifestyle**

It's a very important point, and you can't see in the English, but that's what leaps out from the page of the Greek. And that's what you have a right to know. This is a reference to the Colossians lifestyle. Paul knew that the object of the Colossians' faith (the "eis" of the Colossians' faith) was Jesus Christ. He knew that because they were Christians. He knew that their faith rested upon Jesus Christ. But what he is also delighted to observe is that, having become saved, they live in the sphere of the Word of God. They live in Christ. They practice what they believe. Saving faith has Jesus Christ as its object and its resting place, while living in the sphere of faith has Bible doctrine as its object. One ("eis") is faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, and the other ("en") is faith as your way of life. So, we're talking about something that is very important to Christians – something that the Bible calls "faith." This is more than just faith placed upon Christ for salvation, but faith as a way of life.

Please turn to the book of Jude. We're going to look at Jude 3. Jude sits down to write a letter. Jude is one of the half-brothers of Jesus Christ. He's one of the brothers who made fun of Him before the crucifixion, and ridiculed Him. But after the crucifixion, Jude woke up to the fact that His half-brother Jesus was indeed Israel's Messiah – that He was more than human. He was not exactly like the rest of the family. He looked back, and he realized that this Boy, all of his life – his Brother never did a single thing wrong. He was a sinless man. And suddenly, when he realized that his Brother, Jesus, had been raised from the dead, it hit him between the eyes like a ton of bricks, and he believed in Christ as his personal Savior, as did Mary his mother. Please remember that the Roman Catholic Church, while they say Mary was born without sin, is telling you an enormous lie, because Mary referred to Jesus as her Savior – making it very clear that she needed salvation as a sinner like everyone else.

**Beloved**

So, here's Jude, a very great man, very close to Jesus, and he has it in his heart to write a letter (because of the way things are going) about salvation. He wants to clear up some things about salvation as a grace gift of God. It's a work of faith. He wants to remove any doubt that there's any human doing in the process of being saved. So, in verse 3, he says, "Beloved." This term refers to believers.

In Ephesians 1:6, we read, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved," speaking of what God has done: "Praise of the glory of God's grace which He freely bestowed upon we believers in the Beloved (in the Beloved One)." The Lord Jesus Christ is here called "the Beloved." He is "the Beloved one of the Father." And since we Christians are in Christ by virtue of our salvation (we have been baptized into Christ), therefore, we are in the Beloved. And so we are called "the Beloved." Jay Vernon McGee, when he concludes one of his radio programs, says, "We will continue next time," and he says, "Goodbye, my Beloved, and God bless you." And what he is doing is using this biblical term to say "goodbye" to all the Christians?

Many years ago, our choir used to sing a very attractive haunting little choir number called "In the Beloved." It was a very lovely choir number. We haven't heard it for years, but it was based upon this Scripture. You Christians are in the Son of God.

So, Jude makes it very clear that he is speaking here to Christians. God our heavenly Father loves each of us with the same infinite love that He has for His son because we are in Him. Furthermore, you should remember at the tough times of life that, because you are in the Son, you are part of His Beloved One, your Father will never treat you in any way that he would not treat His Son. So, whatever problems you have; whatever stresses; whatever demands; or, whatever difficulties, remember that it is no more than what God the Father would do to Jesus Christ, His Son. He is not abusing you, or ignoring you, or being indifferent towards you. You are in the Beloved. He can treat you in no other way.

Now, being in the Beloved is positional truth. This is what we call being in the outer circle of eternal fellowship; that is, being permanently in Christ. This big outer circle is what we call eternal fellowship of salvation, in contrast to the inner circle of temporal fellowship where we are in spiritual contact through the Holy Spirit. Now, once we enter this eternal fellowship circle, we're permanently in the family of God. At one time, we sinners were all in Adam. Adam is the place of eternal death. But now with trust in Christ as Savior, the baptism of the Holy Spirit has taken us out of Adam, and has placed us in Christ, so that we are now in "the Beloved One." And thus we are in the place of eternal life.

Romans 8:1 puts it this way: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That is an amazing verse. It will drive some of your relatives crazy who believe that you can lose salvation. They can't handle that. Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." There is no compromise, no exceptions, and nothing.

**Positional Truth**

So, this is a position. And positional truth, please remember, is not an experience. When you are saved by trusting in Christ as savior, you won't necessarily have any emotions about it. You won't have any experience of ecstatics. It is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it is a position. It is not an emotional response.

Furthermore, because it is a position in Christ that makes you his Beloved One, you can't improve the position. You can't increase your position in Christ. You can't get more secure in time or in eternity. You're in. And this position is not related to your human good or to your personal merit. You yourself in no way determine your position in Christ. What determines your position? The goodness of Jesus Christ – not your goodness.

So, Jude begins his letter here clearly speaking to people. Some of them are nice people, and some of them are not such nice people, but they're all born-again people: therefore, they're all in Christ; therefore, they're in the Beloved One; and, therefore, they are the Beloved of God. He begins his letter with the intention, he says, of writing about the doctrine of salvation.

Jude 1:3: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation." He said, "I'm thinking about this. I'm outlining this in my mind. I'm jotting a few notes down. I'm thinking how I'm going to deal with this subject to salvation." And suddenly the doctrine of inspiration, which is God the Holy Spirit supervising and controlling. Whenever a book of the Bible was being written, God the Holy Spirit came in, and He redirects the whole topic. He hits the human author with the realization: "Jude, I don't want you to write about salvation. I need a letter in the Bible which will be the foyer to the book of the Revelation. And I have to have an entrance to that book which deals with what is going to be the consequences of apostasy – the whole book of the Revelation, the consequences of apostasy. So I need a foyer that tells people the terrible consequences of deviating and abandoning the doctrines of the Word of God – the truth of Scripture falling into apostasy, and what that is going to do to the human race.

So finally, the message gets through to Jude that the Holy Spirit is directing him away from the subject of salvation to that of apostasy. The new subject he found was to be contending earnestly for the faith. And here the word "faith" is used in sense of the body of doctrine: "While I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt I was driven by the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith." So the subject now became standing for the truth of doctrine. The Holy Spirit wants a letter warning against times of apostasy when people drift from sound doctrine – the rejection of the Bible as the true Word of God. When any society abandons the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, there is national degeneration; national decline; and, national destruction.

All you have to do is look around you here in America today, and you see how true this is. There is a concerted effort, from the top echelons of the government on down to the lowest brothel on the streets, to turn America away from its biblical origins, and to pretend that this nation was begun by people who had some bad ideas. They were sincere, but they are ideas that are now passé, and which we need to forget and put behind us. And what that means is apostasy from the Word of Truth. When that happens, the society will degenerate; it will decline; and, it is on self-destruct.

The books of the Bible, I remind you, are not merely humanly produced instruments. They are not products of the mind of man alone. 2 Peter 1:21 says, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved, blown along, like wind in the sail, by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

So, prophecy is not only predicting the future, but information from God. In fact, the word "prophecy" means "telling forth" more than it means "foretelling." It is giving information of revelation from God. That's the basic point of prophecy in the process. In the process, sometimes it's predicting the future. Nothing ever came in the Bible except by information from God. And then the men who wrote it were carried along by God, so that they wrote it accurately.

So, Jude said that: "The subject was switched from Salvation to contending earnestly for the faith, and I'm appealing to you to do this." This word "appealing" in the Greek means "to encourage." It means: "I'm commending you to do something." It also carries the idea of comfort. And what is it that he's appealing? He's appealing that: "We contend earnestly." This word "contend" in the Greek epagónizomai (ep-ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee) means to fight intensively. It connotes an intensive fight. This isn't just like: "Well, if you want to believe that, okay. We're all going to agree to disagree." Baloney. We're not going to agree to disagree. If you are wrong, then you are wrong. And it is the Word of God that determines that. We're not going to tell Roman Catholics: "We're all going to agree to disagree that you can go to heaven by works, and it's okay. And we're going to go to heaven the Bible way by faith." You cannot agree to disagree.

So, here we are told that Jude is led by the Spirit of God to call upon believers to identify what he calls the faith (the body of doctrinal truth), and that there is to be an intensive, demanding fight to protect it. The fight for sound doctrine is a major feature of the angelic warfare. That's why it's so rough. Is there anything that we take more flak on here at Berean church than the very way we conduct our services? Is there any flak? Is there anything that bears more contempt than for a visitor to come in here who is disoriented to the Word of God, and he sits here, and when he goes home, he says, "All he did was talk about the Bible the whole time? All he did was explain the Bible the whole time – nothing else." And you would say, "Well, that's what you're supposed to do." But that is not what is done in most churches. People come to hear little pithy sayings; little quips; and little jokes. Anybody knows that if you come to a service here at Berean church, there are no jokes. Nobody laughs. There's nothing funny. There's no entertainment. But there's a lot of information, and you walk out very smart – a lot smarter than when you came in on that little piece of the Bible, if you pay attention.

**Promise Keepers**

Most Christians today are completely oblivious that there is a spiritual fight. So, they take doctrine very, very lightly. One of the organizations that we're affiliated with is going to be associated with a men's organization called the Promise Keepers. They're sending things, and they want them to send them to our office because they're going to use them. Apparently, they're going to have a rally here probably at the stadium. Promise Keepers is a big operation, including men like Bill Bright of Campus Crusade, who have made a career of one rally after another – one Great mountain that are going to conquer after another. Now they're going to conquer Promise Keepers. They're going to get men to be Promise Keepers. And I didn't want throw a wet blanket on it, so I said, "Sure, we'll help you out. We'll take the UPS stuff, and we'll be here when you get here." And I'm sure they're going to do some good, but what are these people trying to do – Promise Keepers?

The problem is, first of all, these men don't know the promises. They're not versed in the doctrines of Scripture. They don't know anything basically about the faith – the body of doctrinal truth. What they need to do is be to be Promise Seekers. That's what they need. They don't need to be Promise Keepers before they're Promise Seekers. After they have had somebody teach them a few things for a couple of years, then they have something to keep. But it's going to be hoopla. That Texas Stadium is going to be reverberating, and they had this kind of acoustical paper stuff that they poured on their ceilings like we have here. That's the Cadillac way to do it, and it's all going to be dripping down on everybody as those reverberations are going to be going through that stadium, and everybody's going to get a hoopla on high, and they're all going to be Promise Keepers. They don't know the promises.

Secondly, they don't know a hill of beans about how to keep the promises. What kind of a look do you think you'd get in the eye of one of those men if you said, "Could you tell me about the difference between eternal and temporal fellowship? Could you draw it on a piece of paper for me so that I can get an idea of what this is?" You'd get blank stares. You would get as blank a stare as you ever got in your life. They wouldn't know what you're talking about. Eternal fellowship? Temporal fellowship? Walking by means of the Spirit? Being filled with the Spirit? How are you filled with the Spirit?

The devil hits a human being to keep you from getting the gospel. He does not want you to hear the gospel of grace salvation. And he doesn't want you to believe it. But if God overrules, and opens your eyes, and you believe it, then the devil shifts gears, and he hits you to keep you a stupid little baby in the faith; to keep you ignorant of the deep things of the Spirit of God; and, to keep you out of touch with great spiritual realities. And the place he hits you, first of all, is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If he cannot distort the doctrine of salvation, and you slip into the saved family, then he will distort the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The charismatics of the great example of that. Charismatics are probably saved, but they're all fouled up chasing rabbits so that they waste their lives, and they will have no treasures in heaven for all their hoopla and for all their potential, because they do not know the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

So here are these men who have no way of knowing how to keep the promises of God. They have no way of knowing how to function under the power of the Holy Spirit. What a travesty, and how insulting to these men who are reaching out and saying, "Help me to do better. Point me in the direction so that I can become a real man, and I can rear a home with true manhood, and my wife can exercise real womanhood, and my children can learn to do the same."

Well, Jude here is saying, "I'm asking you to contend earnestly for the faith. And I'm encouraging you to enter the spiritual defense of the Word of God in the circle of your acquaintance. For the faith, contend earnestly – the body of revealed truth." The defense of Christianity is what? The defense of Christianity is a matter of proclaiming doctrine. Jude's readers knew about salvation. Now they needed the encouragement to rise and defend sound doctrine in the face of all the apostasy that was flowing around them – to be willing to stand up, and to fight back.

Now, this is a personal question that each of us will have to answer. Some of you say, "I'll fight back." Some of you say, "No, I don't like to do that." Some of you try to keep your Christianity as hidden as you can, so that nobody knows it. And some of you are like one of my Dallas Seminary professors who got very aggravated over the fact that every time he went to have a haircut, the barber wanted to give him all the latest, juicy, dirtiest stories he'd heard. And at first he tried to be polite and say, "Ha ha." Then one day, he'd had enough of it. He took hold of his ear and said, "Mr. Jones, does this look like a sewer to you?" And this professor had enormous ears. He was one of those guys with big ears. You rarely see those kind anymore now that Barnum is out of business. But this guy had big ears, and the barber said, "Well, no. Well." He said, "Well, then I would appreciate it if you just didn't pour your sewage into it anymore." And he got a silent haircut.

Are you ready to do that? Jude is saying, "We're going to start fighting back." We're not going to take this anymore – that we Christians are abused as some kind of bumpkins (idiots) that we are the ones that are wrong, when we're the ones that are right. And we're not going to take it. Churches sit there giving you entertainment and trivializing your spiritual potential by giving you little cutesy stories, and making you laugh, and then you go home and wonder: "What on earth happened?" I attended a little sermon recently, and I'd been thinking back about what I remembered from that sermon. And it was top-of-the-line. The speaker was a leading preacher of town. And I can't remember anything that would carry me through a moment of crisis. But there were pithy sayings, and everybody laughed, and people shouted "Amen." That's a dangerous condition to be in. It's a dangerous condition for people to be in, because those people are never going to be able to fulfill the call of Jude, to contend earnestly for the faith.

Now, having said that, I want you to understand that defending the Word of God is not arguing. It is not debating. It is not attacking. It is not engaging in apologetics or polemics, which is debater's way of proving things. Defending the faith is explaining doctrine so that the Bible can act on its own evidence.

I remember when one very famous radio preacher talked to Madeline Murray O'Hare, and had a debate with her. And he wanted to explain the gospel to her, and he gave her John 3:16, and verses like that – Ephesians 2:8-9. And she kept arguing back. And he said, "But God has given you this. God has provided for your sin. You will be judged by him if you are not covered." And he quote another verse. And all through the discussion, he just kept bringing the Bible, and bringing the Bible. He kept shooting at her with the Word of God, because he had an instrument of truth.

In the Marine Corps, we were taught that we have no one who is more important to us, and for whom we must give maximum care every hour of our life, than that M1 rifle they issued to us. That, we were told, will be life or death for you. How you treat that instrument, in caring for it, will respond when you come to the time of crises. You won't have to stand up and tell your enemy, "Now this is an M1 rifle. It has..." And I forget all the statistics that we learned about it. It has this magazine, and it's a semiautomatic, and it shoots every time you pull the trigger, and it has this much muzzle velocity, and so on, and all that stuff. They said, "All you're going to have to do is to point it at the person, and you are going to pull that trigger, and it will speak for itself. Boy, will they ever learn what you have in your hand, and how right you are.

That's the Word of God. You want to avoid getting off into peripheral arguments. You just want to say, "Here's the scripture. Here's the scripture. Here's what God says. Here's what God says. I don't care what your preacher says. And I'm not going to quote myself to you. But here's what the Word of God says." And you keep shooting those spiritual bullets, and they're going to come down. That is what defeats Satan, and that is what God uses for victory. Those who resist sound doctrine will injure themselves, and they will be destroyed.

Now, when people have not been taught the principles of the Word of God, because their preachers have failed them, then they are in danger of apostasy, and becoming spiritual casualties. And anytime anybody gets feisty over a principle of truth, God's truth is going to win out whether you like it or not. The Word of God is the Word of God. The chain of receiving divine viewpoint to resist apostasy is this: God gives us that divine viewpoint in Scripture. Through doctrine, each Christian will find God's special niche for him in life. Under the filling of the Holy Spirit (the control of the Holy Spirit), with known sins confessed, the Christian will produce divine good for the blessing of those about him, and for his personal eternal gain and treasures in heaven. Where does Satan attack this chain? He attacks it at the point of the teaching of doctrine – to keep churches from teaching doctrine from the pulpit.

**Satan**

Well, some churches cover this up and say, "Well, we do it in Sunday school. We don't teach doctrine in church." What are they telling you? "We want to entertain people." There are two kinds of preaching, I finally have discovered. And there are only two kinds. One kind of preaching is entertainment. Now, you think how much preaching is nothing but entertainment? The other kind such as we have here is instruction. Entertainment is easy. It doesn't take that much time to prepare. Instructive kind of preaching is very demanding; very exhausting; and, it requires very hard digging to prepare. But people go nowhere on entertainment preaching. What do you hear on television from the popular pulpit personalities? Entertainment. Oh yes, they throw in things, but somehow, they don't connect. Somehow, you'll lose it by the time Monday morning rolls around. But instructive, line-upon-line, as Isaiah says, "Precept upon precept" – that's going to stick with you. That's the meat and potato that'll hang on your ribs, and will make you a strong Christian so that you are a contending force in the face of apostasy. Therefore, Satan hits this chain of instruction at the point of teaching. He seeks to discourage teachers, because the listeners are unresponsive to doctrine.

I said that recently. I said: "What am I doing here at Berean Church at this stage of my life, and at this stage of my experience? What am I doing here with people who still can't learn to stay off of scuttlebutt?" "Scuttlebutt" is a euphemism for "gossip." Those of you who don't have much education, euphemism is a nice word for a bad thing. And you would think that finally people would learn to do right, but no, they go and do the wrong thing. And you say, "Where are we here? And why are we doing this?" And that's just the devil saying, "Forget the doctrine." No. That's the only weapon you have for people to get straight with. Satan attacks this so that he tempts the teachers (the preacher) to change what is taught, and the word to defend that is "relevant:" "I'm going to get relevant to the resisters. I'm going to invent new techniques of teaching them." Relevant means: "I'm going to appeal to where they live." People who are resistors of doctrine say, "I need something to carry me through the week." You say, "What do you need to carry you through the week?" They say, "Well, I need a little emotional jag – a little kick-up." No you don't. That's not going to carry you anywhere. What you need is not entertaining preaching. You need instructive preaching.

**Objective vs. Subjective**

Now, if you, as a teacher of the Word of God in whatever circle you teach in, you have done your job of instructing in true doctrine, then do not let Satan intimidate you because subjectively-controlled people ignore it. Remember that. It is subjectively-control people that resist. They are the ones who fight you back. Those who are yielded to the Spirit of God, and those who are objectively thinking – they look at what God says, like the Bereans of old. They take their teacher. They hear what the teacher says. They look in the Word of God. That's what's there. And then they say, I believe it." It's all objective. The subjective yo-yo that operates by emotion is a person that's going to be destroyed by Satan. And that's what the devil tries to get you to do.

So, please resist the temptation to compromise your instruction to make yourself relevant, or to make yourself appealing. If God is God, he's going to give us the money to operate. He's going to take us through the crises. He's going to bring us back to the mountaintop. He may do greater things when we are a poor Gideon band than He has ever done when we were a mighty force under the army of David.

Satan also cons us out of teaching sound doctrine by getting us to set up our own basis for evaluating results: "How did I do? Well, did anybody cry in the service?" I didn't do too well. I have to get better stories. What did the people say after the service? Did they come up and say, 'Wonderful sermon, your excellency?' Or did they just walk by? Did some of them go out the door without even speaking to you? Gee, I have to do something better. How am I going to fill up these seats?" You're going to concentrate on empty seats, and not the people of God who have risen to the moment? You're not going to pay attention to them, and see that when they leave, they've gotten what they deserve. And the yo-yos who stayed at home, and let the seats empty – you're going to concentrate on them? It's very tempting, and very stupid. It is the people of God who are before us. Those are the ones we are going to minister to. More participation? No.

So, the Holy Spirit is saying, "Jude, we have a very big problem here. I want you to contend earnestly for this faith (this body of doctrine) which was once-for-all delivered to the saints. I want you to live in the sphere of faith. I want the people of God to live in the sphere of doctrine.

Now in the Scriptures, there's a man in the Old Testament that warms our heart, and that, to this day, we hold in awe. He is one of the all-time great examples. A man who came from nothing, and who knew how to live in the sphere of faith. He's on for our next time.

God, our Father, we thank you for the faith...

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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