***Contending for the Faith - Jude 2-3

JD04-02***

The book of Jude is the book about apostasy. It is the book about people falling away from the truth of God's Word. We come this evening to the second and third verses of this general epistle. You remember that Jude is the writer, and that he is the half-brother of Jesus Christ, and the full brother of James. The book was written about 75 A.D. God the Holy Spirit elected Jude in the writing of this book. Jude does not refer to himself as the brother of Jesus Christ, his human relationship. Rather, he relates himself to the Lord Jesus as a servant, or a bond slave, of Jesus Christ.

The recipients of this letter were identified in the opening verse. There we pointed out a very important word change. If your Bible says, "Them that are *sanctified* by God the Father," it should read, "Them that are *loved* by God the Father." This is a grammatical structure that means something that took place in the past, and which continues to the present, and which is received as a gift. It's an advantage to be loved by God the Father. Then we found that we are also preserved. That means to guard something that one owns. This again is a perfect participle which in the Greek grammar means that it happens in the past and it continues. Here is one of the verses for the establishing of eternal security.

Then we came to the word "called," and this led us into the doctrine of election. The definition of election that we gave is that election is the sovereign act of God in choosing for salvation in Christ Jesus those whom He had predestinated according to His own purpose. Election then means a sovereign divine purpose formed apart from any human merit; from human descent; or, from human cooperation.

**Mercy**

So we come to Jude 2 where Jude says, "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied." This expresses good wishes to these who are the recipients of this letter. In the New Testament, you usually find the salutation as grace, mercy, and peace. For example, in 1 Timothy 1:2 and in 2 John 3, it goes "Grace, mercy, and peace." However, here the word grace is left out by Jude, and mercy heads the list--mercy and peace. Mercy is divine pity that God has toward us in our misery of sin, and He brings relief to us because of the grace of God. So mercy, in reality, is the grace of God in action in our behalf.

In Hebrews 4:16, the writer says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." When we look for mercy, we have to come to the point of the grace of God. It is God's grace that produces mercy. Mercy is grace in action. Mercy stresses our personal spiritual need and our helplessness. God meets this through his love. Ephesians 2:4 speaks about this kindness on the part of God: "But God who is rich in mercy for His great love with which He loved us." Because God is love, He is merciful to us in our misery of sin. Mercy refers primarily to this saving act of God. "Mercy unto you," in the Greek language means that it is an advantage unto us to have this mercy.

**Peace**

Then he bids also peace which is a tranquility resulting from the comfort that mercy brings. Remember that there are two kinds of peace in the Bible. First of all, we have peace which is with God. This is peace in two directions--with God. This is the peace that we actually find as a result of salvation. This has to do with our position. You read about this in Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That means that the wall between us and God has been removed. The barrier has been removed, and we stand in a position to Jesus Christ that creates peace with God. The word means to join what has been separated. A holy God and sinful man are united through the cross of Jesus Christ.

When you have peace with God, you will also enter another peace, and that is the peace *of* God. The peace of God is what we have in our experience. This is what we know day-by-day. Philippians 4:6-7 speak about this. Isaiah 26:3-4 speak about the peace that we have of God. This peace is a mental attitude. In Isaiah 26:3-4, Isaiah says, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God is everlasting strength." This is our peace in experience. Peace is the result of an attitude of mind, an attitude of trusting in the Lord.

**Love**

Then he also brings them, along with mercy and peace, that love should be multiplied. This is the love which is produced by the filling of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). This love too is a mental attitude. Deuteronomy 6:5 speaks to us about, "Loving the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." Here the word heart means mind. Hebrews 12:15 warns against a root of bitterness. I find that many times Christians who may have a root of bitterness are proud of their root of bitterness. They defend their root of bitterness on the fact that they have a right to have it. Somebody has done them in. Somebody has mistreated to them. If you want to play the fool, you're your own priest and you can be your own fool. You can go ahead and do that. You can have that root of bitterness, but it will destroy you. This is what will destroy your relaxed mental attitude. This is what will create mental attitude sins so that your contact with God and your service will rapidly deteriorate.

Hebrews 12:15: "Looking diligently," and that means to walk around and watch where you step. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." God's grace who has forgiven you everything, and you're not going to forgive somebody else something because you think they have something such that you can legitimately gripe about against them? Most of the time, the things that we think people have done to us; ways that people have injured us; or, what we think people think and do is not true at all. They don't feel that way. That isn't what they've done. That isn't their intention. We've misread them. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and by it many be defiled." That's the sad part--the last part of the verse. It's not only you who are injured, but the fact that you have to constantly be defiling people around you.

It is very burdensome to be around a bitter person, especially one that's proud of it and determined. Constantly there are people who are moving in peace. They have peace with God through their salvation, and in their experience, they know how to walk with the peace of God. Then here is this harassment on the side, constantly chipping away; constantly striking; and, constantly destroying the mental well-being of those about them, so that they can indulge in that bitterness of spirit. That's something to be very careful of. This is a very precious thing that Jude says to these readers when he says, "I want to ask that God should multiply upon you His mercy which will meet the needs of the misery that sin brings upon us. I ask for His peace in your daily walk so that you have a relaxed mental attitude, and blessing pours into your life, and that love should be multiplied." This mental attitude of goodwill should be multiplied all of your life, characterized by these qualities.

In the Greek, the word "multiplied" is in the passive voice which means that God has to give it to us. You can't produce this. It's not based on emotions and it's not based on capacity. Furthermore it's in what the Greek calls optative mood which means that this is Jude's fervent wish. He begins this epistle and says, "This is what I earnestly wish for you believers."

We come to Jude 3 and we discover that Jude has had to make a switch of plans. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and to exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." He addresses these people as "beloved," which is a term for Christians. Ephesians 1:6 refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as the beloved. We are in the beloved because we are in Him, and therefore God views us in a certain relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ that is, again, an eternal relationship.

**Positional Truth**

All of this is talking about what we refer to as positional truth. You may diagram it with concentric circles. There is a large circle, and inside of it is a smaller circle. The Christian is viewed as being in Christ. This outer circle is viewed as being in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). We call this the place of positional truth. This is your position. This is your standing with God. This is the place of eternal fellowship. At the point of salvation, you exercise faith in Jesus Christ. The moment you exercised faith, the baptism of the Holy Spirit placed you into this inner circle of temporal and eternal fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In temporal fellowship, 1 John 1:3 indicates, we have fellowship with the Father as well as with the Son. This is experiential truth in the inner circle. In the outer circle, it's positional truth. This is where you stand. You can never leave the outer circle. This is always true of you. You can be the greatest spiritual dunderhead and the greatest spiritual failure you can imagine, but you never leave this position of eternal security in the positional relationship to Jesus Christ.

In the inner circle, we have temporal fellowship. This is the place that a spiritual Christian resides. In the outer circle is the carnal Christian. The spiritual Christian is in this position in the inner circle as long as all known sin is confessed. When we sin, we jump out of the inner circle, but we always stay within the outer circle. When we confess, we come back into the inner circle. When we are only in the outer circle, we are unproductive spiritually. When we are in the inner circle, we are highly productive spiritually.

It is important that we understand that relationship. That's what beloved means. To be in the beloved means to be in Jesus Christ. That is a very very precious position. Once you understand that, your heart again will be at peace about a lot of questions relative to your life; to the things you do; the things that you're surprised about yourself that you do; and, how they affect your relationship to God. You were once in Adam, but now, God says, you are in His Son.

Romans 8:1 describes this position: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." You should take a pencil and scratch out the rest of the verse which says, "Who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." That was inserted by some legalistic scribe whose eye jumped down to verse four where it does belong, and he brought it up and put it into one of the ancient texts in the first verse. It does not belong in the first verse, and we have confirmation that this does not belong in the original Greek. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Period. You cannot be condemned for anything you do once you are in Christ. Now that's positional truth.

Your walk and your state are two different things. You have a standing in Christ, but your walk can be something else. You enter this position through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Whether you are a carnal believer or a spiritual believer, you can see by these two circles that you're both in Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 1:30, speaking to carnal Christians, indicate that both of them are in Christ. This protects you from judgment in eternity. It qualifies you to live with God forever because you have eternal life. You had the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ laid to your account (2 Corinthians 5:21). Every time God looks at you, He sees you in the perfect righteousness of His Son.

This guarantees your security, and it produces a new creature out of you. This positional truth is in two directions. It is in the past. Roman 6 tells you about that. God says that He looks upon you as having died on the cross with Christ; having been buried with Christ; and, having been raised with Christ. Romans 6:3-4 tell us about that. This is the basis of your victory. You always go back to the cross. That is the basis of your walk and your security. However, positional truth also applies to today. Colossians 3:1-4 speaks about our identification with Christ in His glorified state as He sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. You are related to Him, and everything that is His is now at your disposal. Colossians 3:1-4: "If then you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

This is the travesty of a Christian life. Here is a Christian. He sits on the reality here of positional truth. Instead of living in the light of this which has taken place in the past, here in the present he lives as if he is not a child of God. His attention, instead of being centered on the things above and on the things of the Lord, is centered on the things that are below. He grovels around down in this world and in this scene. This is the big thing with him. When you find a Christian who's walking in that carnal state, out in the carnal position of only the outer circle, it is because he has forgotten who he is. He has forgotten the position he has in Christ, and that that position places him today in a very marvelous relationship, and gives him capacities to learn the Christian life in a very victorious way.

Because you are in Christ, there are certain things that are true of you. You share all of these things here with the Lord Jesus Christ. You have His life (1 John 5:11-12, John 20:31). You will have His righteousness. That's yours (2 Corinthians 5:21). You share his destiny (Ephesians 1:5-6). You share His Sonship. You too are God son (Galatians 3:26, Romans 8:14-16). You share His heirship, or His inheritance (1 Peter 1:4-5, Romans 8:17). You share His sanctification, or His setting apart (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30). You share His priesthood (Hebrews 10:10-14, 1 Peter 2:5, 9). And you share His kingdom (2 Peter 1:11, Colossians 1:13). All of these things are yours because you are in Christ.

There is something you should remember, I remind you once more, concerning positional truth. It is not an experience. You have no emotion and you have no ecstatics over the fact that you come into a position with Christ. This is something that's done for us at the moment of salvation. Furthermore, it's not something you can improve. You cannot improve your position in Christ. You cannot get more in Christ. You cannot improve it in time, and you cannot improve it in eternity. Furthermore it's not related to your human good or to your merit. There is nothing of yourself that's involved in the position God has given us in Christ--only His divine good. Furthermore, it is eternal in nature. You cannot change and man cannot change your position in Christ. Angels cannot change your position in Christ. Even God himself can't change it. He has committed Himself to placing you in that wonderful position. All of these things are true, and they will always be true for you. They can never be removed. You retain and receive all of this, and it is complete at the point of salvation.

How do we know this? Only from the Word of God. It is as we read through the Word of God that we discover that we have this relationship to Him. That's the meaning of the word "beloved" in Jude 3. "Beloved" means to be in Christ.

So Jude goes on. He says, "I gave all diligence to write to you." The word "gave" should be translated, "I made." "I made all diligence." This is in the present sense. What he is saying is, "I kept trying to get started on something." It's in middle voice, for your benefit. "I kept trying to get started on something." What was he trying to do? Well he said, "To write." Again, this expresses purpose. My purpose was to write. I kept starting to write. "I kept trying to write to you for a benefit that I wanted to bring you." Then he tells me what he was going to write about. He said, "I wanted to write to you about our common salvation." This is not *the* common salvation, but *our* common salvation in the Greek. "I wanted to write to you not *of*  the common salvation, but *concerning* the common salvation." "Concerning" is a better word. This is a salvation which is common to all the believers. It's necessary for the outcast and the respected sinner.

**Jude's Intent**

Jude intended to write to these people. He took up his pen; he sat down; and, he started to write a letter to these believers concerning the salvation that all of them shared together in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, something interfered because he says, "It was needful for me to write to you. It was a necessity that rested upon me." Something compelled Jude to redirect the subject matter of this letter. Instead of writing about salvation, he switched to a totally different subject.

**Apostasy**

Now why did he do that? Because God the Holy Spirit moved upon him, and as he was about to write, God the Holy Spirit brought directives to his mind, and said, "No, Jude, I want you to write a letter to these people, but not about salvation. I want you to write about contending for the faith--contending for the totality of the revelation of the Word of God, which has once and for all been delivered to the saints. This is because there is starting to come a time when people are going to resist the Word of God, and you are to write a letter concerning their reactions to apostasy, and how they are to treat this matter at the time."

So there was no escape for Jude. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he had to change the subject. These are not mere human documents that we have in the Bible. 2 Peter 1:21 very clearly declares to us that these men wrote it as God the Holy Spirit moved them. Therefore, we have an accurate reflection here of what God thinks.

I remember many years ago a college professor saying that if you were to take all the books in the world, and you were to find a large room, and then you were to stack up all these books according to some classification, the Bible would be in pile by itself. No other book could be put with the Bible because of the nature of its authorship. Jude said that the author, "God the Holy Spirit, took over. He interposed, or He overrode, my intentions so that I could not write what I was going to write to you." So what did he do?

Jude says, "It was necessary for me to write to you and to exhort you." The word "exhort" means to encourage you in something, and it connotes commanding people to a certain action that they were to take. Then he tells what that is: "To exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith." "Earnestly contend" is active. You do it yourself. It's present. You do it all the time. And it's an infinitive, which means its purpose. He's showing the purpose.

In the phrase, "For the faith," the faith is referring to the contents of this letter--the contents of the revelation of the Word of God that we have in the whole New Testament. Again, this is the purpose to these recipients, that they are to contend for the faith. He was going to fulfill, in writing this letter, the admonition to these believers that they should defend Christianity zealously. Jude's subject matter has been changed to apostasy. These readers knew about salvation truth, but they needed encouragement to rise and to defend what they knew of the Word of God.

**Contenting for the Faith**

What does it mean to contend? How do you contend? How do you defend strenuously the Word of God? Obviously, immediately you and I have to put ourselves under the microscope and say, "Do I contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints? As I go about my job, as I go through the day, can it be said of me, 'There goes a man who contends earnestly for the Word and the revelation of the Word of God?'" How do you do it? Well, the way to defend the Word of God is not to argue like crazy; not to debate; not to attack; and, not to give apologetics and polemics. The way to defend the Word of God is simply to explain it so that the Word of God can act as its own evidence.

If I were to bring a high-powered rifle in here, I could give a lot of arguments why that rifle could kill you. However, all of those arguments are unnecessary if I would simply demonstrate how it works. You would quickly get the point. On a firing range in the Marine Corps, one of the unforgivable things is to step back from the line and leave the bolt closed. On one occasion, one poor knucklehead yard bird did. That drill instructor walked down the line as we all stood there, and he saw this bolt close, and he grabbed that gun the way they slammed out of the hand, and he put the barrel up to this knuckleheads temple, up to his head, and said, "Now pull the trigger mister." He disobeyed an order, and he didn't pull the trigger. As he thought it over, he wasn't sure that maybe he hadn't left one more round in the chamber, and he couldn't take a chance. But the drill instructor knew how to make his point. He didn't explain how this thing can hurt you; how have to be careful with it; or, that this will bite you. He just demonstrated.

That's what you do with the Word of God. Are you going to contend for it? You explain it. You tell people how it works. You tell people what it means. The Word of God speaks for itself. Anybody who wants to buck the Word of God is running into a stone wall, and he will beat himself bloody, and he will destroy himself against the eternal Word of God. This is a supernaturally produced book. So the way to defend it is by giving the recipients (those who listen to it) the understanding of the Word of God. Failure to keep the truths of the Bible clear to people is what leads to apostasy. Why do people fall away from the Word of God? Because somebody has not made clear what the Word of God says to them.

And so we get back to a very important concept. Once more, I hope you will never forget this. Here is the chain. God produces divine viewpoint. Divine viewpoint is contained in Bible doctrine which we find in the revealed Old and New Testaments of the Scripture. Through Bible doctrine, you will find God's plans for your life in particular. As you find God's plan for your life, and under the functioning of the filling of the Holy Spirit, you will produce divine good for which God will reward you. I told you in the previous session that if there is anything that Satan is going to attack, it's going to be right here, against doctrine, and he will.

He will attack it in this way: God will cause you to teach the Word to people. He will cause you to explain doctrine and to lay it out. That's contending for the Word. The people listening to you will be unresponsive, and Satan will come along and say, "Hey, you're not doing too good, man. You think you're teaching the Word of God, but look at these people. They're not responding. They're not turning to it."

Pretty soon you will say, "I've got to change what I'm teaching. I have to become relevant. I have to become something where the people are so that they will understand. I have to change my technique. I've got to do it differently. I've got to be more clever. I've got to slip up on their blind side. I have to make a big show so that they will sit up and listen." You might make a big show. You might crack your jokes. They might laugh. You might have a good time. They might leave your meeting and say, "Well, that was really interesting." And there might be absolutely nothing that you gave them. Unless you have taught them doctrine, you have not contended for the Word. Don't fall for the ruse that if only you would do it some other way; if only you would do it better; and, if only you would teach them something other than doctrine then people would respond.

You would be surprised how people hate doctrine. I get more resistance on doctrine. I get more resistance on laying out certain doctrinal patterns. We have a group of studies in our youth clubs that we use. We preached a whole series of sermons out of those studies just to orient the youth club leaders in the congregation. People are forever coming up with new ideas on how we should teach something else so that we can be useful to the kids where they live. However, the issue is that you're exercising your gift of teacher and you're putting out the straight scoop. I know there are some people who teach that shouldn't be teaching. Some people are trying to have a great wonderful emotional fun time with Bible study who don't know up from down. However, if you have taught the Word, and you have exercised your gift, then that person who listens has to go positive or he has to go negative.

When Satan comes up to you and tries to belt you with the idea that you haven't done your job, you just tell him, "Beat it, Satan. I happen to know that it is the volition of the hearer who's at fault here, not the Word of God that I have taught or the condition under which I delivered that Word." If that person goes negative, he will go negative. I don't care how you doll it up. I don't care how cute your technique is. I don't care how you change the subject matter. Satan loves to do this--to get you to change subject matter because you think that this is what this person needs next week, and this is what he will use right now. The result is that you will produce stunted spiritual growth. If you're going to contend for the faith, you have to deliver it.

Incidentally, another thing Satan does is that he comes along and he sets up certain criteria. He helps you to set up your own standards. You say, "Now I have taught the Word of God. I want to evaluate what it has done." How are you going to evaluate the returns on the Word of God? You're going to say, "Well, let me see. If I teach the kids and they all have tears in their eyes, I know we've accomplished something for the Lord. I know that if I teach the Word of God, and they come by after the meeting and they shake my hand, and they say, 'Boy that was really great,' I know that I've accomplished something for the Lord." You teach your lesson, and the kids all bring twice the amount of shares next week. Oh, what a great spiritual accomplishment you've made.

You set up all these little criteria of your own. Where do you think you got them? Who told you that that's the basis upon which God judges and reflects whether He has done something in a human heart as a result of His Word? You have picked that up from human viewpoint. You have picked that out of somebody else's emotions. What you are doing is conning yourself as a good teacher of the Word of God. Or maybe you're right on the beam, and Satan is going to jar you off that track.

Here's the track, and this is the chain of reaction. It goes from God who has a viewpoint to deliver, and it goes to doctrine. If you have some character who jumps the tracks at this point, you can forget it. If he has chosen to jump the tracks, there's nothing you can do to make him start functioning. There is nothing better than doctrine. That's how you can contend for the faith. So stop berating yourself. Stop having guilt complexes because somebody sits there and is a resister of the Word, and Satan convinces you that if only you do it a little differently, you can change him. You ought to make it as interesting and you ought to make it as clear as possible, but after all is said and done, it is the principle of truth that has to be laid out. So Jude's point here is that you should give the truth that you know. This is God's program for the age.

The nature of the truth is described as one that was "once for all delivered to the saints." It means to entrust their safe keeping, and doctrine which is rightly used is productive. Incidentally, that's the only thing that's productive. Only doctrine which is rightly used is spiritually productive. Maybe you don't see it now, but maybe you will see it down the years.

I've been 21 years in one place, and I can give you a case history after case history after case history of people that have gone through all kinds of up and down with rocking motions in their lives spiritually. They were people who are the most unpromising you could have ever imagined when they were younger, and who have grown up into a stabilized spiritual maturity. Do you know what that tells me? That tells me that Berean Memorial Church is getting the job done in human lives. People have an opportunity, because they're taught doctrine, to go on in the things of the Lord. After a while there is a ground for them to go on with the Lord. However, many people in many places go through the same unstable days of their youth resisting the Word; fighting their parents; and, standing against their spiritual leaders, but when the time comes when they're ready to give God a real hearing, there's no basis; there's no ground; and, there's no doctrine.

It says, "Once for all delivered." We are the recipients, again according to the grammar. This is an aorist participle so that "once delivered" precedes the main action which is "earnestly contend." Before you can earnestly contend, you have to have the Word. Once you have it, you can go. So Christians have the knowledge which is made available to defend the truth of God. However, you cannot declare what you don't know, and when you don't know, that's when you go into apostasy. That's when you go into the cults.

It's quite evident that some of you are beginning to get a little more confidence in yourself relative to healers and to the tongues crowd. I can tell by some of the questions you are putting to me and some of the concerns that others were expressing to me that some of you were not really sure where you stood. You walked and you listened and you watched, and you've been flooding me with the articles today because all the big wheels were in town yesterday. All the big guns were here of the Pentecostal world and the Full Gospel Businessmen's conference and the whole bit. It got widespread coverage. However, many of you came by and you said, "Now I knew what was going on. When I read it and when I saw the names, I knew what it was that they stood for, and there it was clear to me. Why? Because you have learned some doctrine on that subject, and you're not ready to fall off into somebody's attractive cult experience.

Therefore, we need a system for all of these people who missed a number of our studies on tongues in our church services. People come to me sometimes indignantly because they have heard me say something that I didn't explain, and right away I know that they were not at that service where that was explained. So if you have missed the Word of God and if you have been on a long desert vacation away from the Word of God, you have missed an awful lot. I would suggest that you do yourself a service of getting hold of some of the recordings or transcripts, and getting caught up. When a person is absent from a service, he misses something, and he should seek to make it up through the preserved messages. That's the beauty of what goes on here. Without this, you can never really contend for the faith, and you have all kinds of holes in your understanding.

**Saints**

To whom does he say this? He says, "Once delivered unto the saints." He is speaking about those who have been set apart by the Word of God. This is positional truth fellowship. Jesus Christ has set us apart unto God. Since we are in Christ, we are set apart unto God. That's our position, and it's an invaluable place in which to be. That's why you are saints. Everybody here tonight is a saint. A saint doesn't mean you're a goody goody. A saint does not mean that you do not smoke and you do not chew and you do not go with girls that do. It means that you are in Christ. You're in the inner circle. That's who a saint is.

You can just look at your fellow Christians, and you will see a saint. They don't always act like a believer but as you look at another Christian, you will see a saint. It may upset you what you see, but that is a saint. You could call that person "Saint (whatever his name is)." Just look at them call her "Saint Lenora;" "Saint Calvin;" look at Mr. Rouch and call him "Saint Bernard;" or, whatever it is. You are saints because you are in Christ, and nobody can change that.

You believers are the people that we're talking to. You are the people that Jude is talking to, to get out there and start hustling for the Lord with the Word, not with all of your gimmicks and devices and inventions, but with the Word. We're not to be argumentative, polemic, and apologetic. That often is counterproductive. But we need to say, "Here's what the law has said. Here's a principle of the Bible to answer this question to guide in this issue." That's great. That helps people. That brings the joy of the Lord into their hearts, and it puts a song on their lips because it protects them from playing a fool's game.

**Gaining Knowledge**

It is important that I remind you once more that you gain knowledge in three ways. You have to be here to listen to it. However, there is a system of learning.

1. **Empiricism**

Number one is called empiricism. Empiricism is learning through your senses. Your five senses give you direction. You learn things through your senses. You get certain realities as a result of those senses. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says that you cannot learn through your senses when it comes to spiritual things. In 1 Corinthians 2:9, the context is talking about learning spiritual things. It says, "But as it is written, eye has not seen nor heard, neither have entered the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." You will not learn spiritual things through your senses. If you reject that, you're going to be in trouble.

1. **Rationalism**

The second way that we learn things is rationalism. Rationalism is simply using your reasoning powers. We learn a great deal through our reasoning powers. The test of validity is the conclusions of our own minds. When you hear somebody say, "I'm not sure about this spiritual subject, and I'm still working that out," he can mean two things. He can mean, "I'm still reasoning my way through to what I think is the truth about this subject," or he may mean that, "I'm still searching Scripture to find what God has said." If he means rationalism, "I'm still thinking my way through," he will never come to the truth. He will never arrive at it because you have to go through a third method in order to arrive at spiritual truth. Rationalism cannot produce it.

1 Corinthians 1:19-21 tell us that: "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.' Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hasn't God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Do you know how you're saved? Do you know what the prophetic gift included? The declaration of the truth. You might call it preaching. Preaching is the same as teaching. If it's not teaching it's not preaching. It's just bellowing. However, God says you can't learn through your reason when it comes to spiritual things. You won't reason yourself into heaven. You won't get it through your senses.

1. **Faith**

The only other way of learning spiritual things is through faith, by believing an authority. You place your faith in that authority. You decide that this authority knows what He's talking about. We do this in life all the time. When it comes to spiritual things, God says this is the only way that you will learn. You will learn as a result of this non meritorious system. Empiricism credits you with good senses. Rationalism credits you with good IQ. However, faith credits only God, and that's the way He works. Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." In the case of spiritual phenomena, it takes faith to learn it--to believe the Word of God and to believe what has a value to believe. Faith in itself is not worth anything, but the object gives it value. This is the only principle upon which you can come to an understanding of the Word of God so that you can contend for the faith of the Word of God.

Perhaps you're not a Christian. I want to spend the last couple of minutes to read to you the information that you need to use your faith upon in order to enter the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and in order to enter the family of God. In John 3:15-16, we read that, "Whosoever believes in Him (that is, Jesus Christ) should not perish but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The word "believe" means to "trust Him." That's faith. That's trusting that Jesus Christ went to the cross; He died for you; He accepted all of the punishment and all of the guilt that was upon you; He wiped your sin clean; and, here, at the point of the cross, by faith (by trusting), you may be placed in Christ.

Now that's what He's offering to do for you right now. This is a gift that you may accept, and there is nothing more that you may add to it. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Once you do this, you will be in a position where you can understand doctrine; where you can apply it; and, where you can really start living. If you have not received Christ as your Savior, why would you continue in that same darkness? Why go out into that dark night with spiritual darkness in your soul, when in a moment of time, you can turn the light on, and God the Holy Spirit will illuminate your entire body? I hope that you trust Him now. I hope that you will use the system of faith. Your senses will not do. Your reasoning will not do. However, your simple believing of what God has said will do it every time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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